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THE INDUNA'S WIFE

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THE

INDUNA'S WIFE

BY

BERTRAM MITFORD

AUTHOR OF 'THE KING'S ASSEGAI' 'THE WHITE SHIELD' 'THE SIGN OF THE SPIDER' 'FORDHAM'S FEUD' ETC.

WITH ILLUSTRATIONS BY A. D. M'CORMICK

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THE INDUNA'S WIFE.

PROLOGUE.

TWILIGHT was fast closing in upon the desolate site of the old Kambúla Camp, and the short, sharp thunderstorm which at the moment of outspanning had effectually drenched the scant supply of fuel, rendering that evening's repast, of necessity, cold commons, had left in its wake a thin but steady downpour. Already the line of low hills hard by was indistinct in the growing gloom, and a far-reaching expanse of cold and treeless plains made up a surrounding as mournful and depressing as could be.

The waggon stood outspanned in the tall grass, which, waist high, was about as pleasant to stand in as the drift of a river. Just above, the conical ridge, once crested with fort and waggon laagers, and swarming with busy life, and the stir and hum of troops on hard active service, now desolate and abandoned—the site, indeed, still discernible if only by ancient tins, and much fragmentary residue of the ubiquitous British bottle. Below, several dark patches in the grass

marked the resting-place of hundreds of Zulu dead—fiery, intrepid warriors—mown down in full and sweeping rush, with lips still framing the war cry of their king, fierce resolute hands still gripping the deadly charging spear. Now a silent and spectral peace rested upon this erewhile scene of fierce and furious war, a peace that in the gathering gloom had in it something that was weird, boding, oppressive. Even my natives, usually prone to laughter and cheery spirits, seemed subdued, as though loth to pass the night upon this actual site of vast and tolerably recent bloodshed; and the waggon leader, a smart but unimaginative lad, showed a suspicious alacrity in driving back the span from drinking at the adjacent water-hole. Yes! It is going to be a detestable night.

The oxen are not yet made fast to the disselboom for the night, and one of my natives is away to collect them. The others, rolled in their blankets beneath the waggon, are becoming more and more drowsy in the hum of their conversation. Suddenly this becomes wide-awake and alert. They are sitting up, and are, I gather from their remarks, listening to the approach of something or somebody. Who—what is it? There are no wild animals to reckon with in that part of the country, save for a stray leopard or so, and Zulus have a wholesome shrinking from moving abroad at night, let alone on such a night as this. Yet on peering forth, a few seconds reveal the approach of somebody. A tall form starts out of the darkness and the long wet grass, and from it the deep bass tones of the familiar Zulu greeting: 'NKOSE!'

Stay! Can it be? I ought indeed to know that voice; yet what does its owner here thus and at such an hour? This last, however, is its said owner's business exclusively.

'Greeting, Untúswa! Welcome, old friend,' I answered. 'Here is no fire to sit by, but the inside of the waggon is fairly dry; at any rate not so wet as outside. And there is a dry blanket or two and a measure of strong *tywala* to restore warmth, likewise snuff in abundance. So climb up here, winner of the King's Assegai, holder of the White Shield, and make thyself snug, for the night is vile.'

Now, as this fine old warrior was in the act of climbing up into the waggon, there came a sound of trampling and the clash of horns, causing him to turn his head. The waggon leader, having collected the span, was bringing it in to attach to the yokes for the night, for it promised soon to be pitch dark, and now the heads of the oxen looked spectral in the mist. One especially, a great black one, with wide branching horns rising above the fast gathering sea of vapour, seemed to float upon the latter—a vast head without a trunk. The sight drew from Untúswa a shake of the head and a few quick muttered words of wonderment. That was all then, but when snug out of the drizzling rain, warmed by a measure of whisky, and squatting happy and comfortable in a dry blanket, snuff-box in hand, he began a

CHAPTER I.

THE TALE OF THE RED DEATH.

THERE was that about the look of your oxen just now, *Nkose*—shadowed like black ghosts against the mist—that brought back to my old mind a strange and wonderful time. And the night is yet young. Nor will that tale take very long in telling, unless—ah, that tale is but the door opening into a still greater one; but of that we shall see—yes, we shall see.

I have already unfolded to you, *Nkose*, all that befell at the Place of the Three Rifts, and how at that place we met in fierce battle and rolled back the might of Dingane and thus saved the Amandebeli as a nation. Also have I told the tale of how I gained the White Shield by saving the life of a king, and how it in turn saved the life of a nation. Further have I told how I took for principal wife Lalusini, the sorceress, in whose veins ran the full blood of the House of Senzangakona, the royal House of Zululand, and whom I had first found making strange and powerful *mûti* among the Bakoni, that disobedient people whom we stamped flat.

For long after these events there was peace in our land. The arm of Dingane was stretched out against us no more, and Umzilikazi, our king, who had meditated moving further northward, had decided to sit still in the great kraal, Kwa'zingwenya, yet a little longer. But though we had peace from our more powerful enemies, the King would not suffer the might of our nation to grow soft and weak for lack of practice in the arts of war—oh, no. The enrolling of warriors was kept up with unabated vigour, and the young men thus armed were despatched at once to try their strength upon tribes within striking distance, and even far beyond the limits of the same. Many of these were mountain tribes, small in numbers, but brave and fierce, and gave our fiery youths just as much fighting as they could manage ere wetting their

So it was with Umzilikazi. The fear of Dingane removed, the recollection of the conspiracy of Tyuyumane and the others returned—that conspiracy to hand over our new nation to the invading Amabuna—that conspiracy which so nearly succeeded, and, indeed, would have completely, but for the watchfulness and craft of the old Mosutu witch doctor. Wherefore, with this suspicion ever in the King's mind we, *izinduna*, seemed to have fallen upon uneasy times. Yet the principal object of dislike and distrust to the Great Great One was not, in the first place, one of ourselves. No councillor or fighting man was it, but a woman—and that woman Lalusini, my principal wife.

'Ha, Untúswa!' would the King say, talking dark, but his tone full of gloomy meaning. 'Ha, Untúswa, but thine *amahlose* * watch over thee well. Tell me, now, where is there a man the might of whose spear and the terror of whose name sweeps the world—whose slumbers are lulled by the magic of the mighty, and who is greater even than kings? Tell me, Untúswa, Where is such a man?'

'I think such is to be found not far hence, Great Great One. Even in this house,' I answered easily, yet with a sinking fear of evil at heart, for his words were plain in their meaning; my successes in war surpassed by none; my beautiful wife, the great sorceress of the Bakoni, the wandering daughter of Tshaka the Terrible. And his tone—ah, that, too, spoke.

* Tutelary spirits.

'Even in this house! *Yeh-bo!* Untúswa—thou sayest well,' went on the King softly, his head on one side, and peering at me with an expression that boded no good. 'Even in this house! Ha! Name him, Untúswa. Name him.'

'Who am I that I should sport with the majesty of the King's name?' I answered. 'Is not the son of Matyobane—the Founder of Mighty Nations—the Elephant of the Amandebeli—such a man? Doth not his spear rule the world, and the terror of his name—*au!*—who would hear it and laugh? And is not the bearer of that name greater than other kings—greater even than the mighty one of the root of Senzangakona—whose might has fled before the brightness of the great king's head-ring? And again, who sleeps within the shadow of powerful and pro-

when Umzilikazi summoned me to talk over matters of state, would he soon lead the conversation into such channels; and, indeed, I saw traps and pitfalls beneath every word. But now the voice of an *inceku*—or household attendant—was heard without singing the words of *sibonga*, and by the way in which he praised we knew he desired to announce news of importance. At a sign from the King I admitted the man.

'There are men without, O Divider of the Sun,' he began—when he had made prostration—'men from the kraals of Maqandi-ka-Mahlu, who beg the protection of the King's wise ones. The Red Magic has been among them again.'

'Ha! The Red Magic!' said Umzilikazi, with a frown. 'It seems I have heard enough of such childish tales. Yet, let the dogs enter and whine out their own story.'

Through the door of the royal dwelling, creeping on hands and knees, came two men. They were not of our blood, but of a number whom the King had spared, with their wives and children, and had located in a region some three days to the northward as far as a swift walker could travel. It was a wild and mountainous land—a land of black cliffs and thunderous waterfalls—cold, and sunless, and frowning—a meet abode of ghosts and all evil things. Here they had been located, and, being skilled in ironwork, were employed in forging spear-heads and axes for our nation. They were in

charge of Maqandi-ka-Mahlu—a man of our race, and a chief—and who, having been 'smelt out' by our witch doctors, the King had spared—yet had banished in disgrace to rule over these iron-workers in the region of ghosts and of gloom.

Their tale now was this. The stuff which they dug from the bowels of the earth to make the metal for our spears and axes was mostly procured in a long, deep, gloomy valley, running right up into the heart of the mountains. Here they bored holes and caves for digging the stuff. But, for some time past, they had not been able to go there—for the place had become a haunt of *tagati*. A terrible ghost had taken up its abode in the caves, and did a man wander but the shortest space of time from his fellows, that man was never again seen.

They could no more go to that place for the terror which haunted it. They had tried keeping together, so that none might fall a prey to the evil monster—and, for some while, none had. But there came a day when travelling thus, in a body close together, through the gloom of the forest, a sudden and frightful roaring, as of the advance of a herd of savage bulls, burst upon them. Some fell, half dead with fear; others, crying out that they could see fearful shapes, with gigantic horns and flaming eyes, moving among the trees, rushed blindly in all directions. Of thirty men who had entered that dreadful valley, ten only came forth, nor of these could any be persuaded to return and see what had happened to the remaining score. But the seer, Gasitye, who knew no terror of things of the other world, had ventured in. Twenty bodies had he seen—lying scattered—no two together—no, not anywhere two together—and all had died the Red Death.

'And was this by day or by night?' said the King, who had been listening with great attention to this tale.

'By day, O Ruler of the World. While yet the sun was straight overhead,' replied the men.

'Well, I care not,' said Umzilikazi, with a sneer. 'Go back now and cause your seer, Gasitye, to charm away that *tagati*, and that soon, lest I visit him and you with the fate of those who make witchcraft. Shall we keep a dog who cannot guard our house? For to what other use can we turn such a dog? Begone.'

There was despair upon the faces of the two messengers as the meaning of these words became plain to them—and in truth were they between two perils, even as one who travels, and, being beset by a great fire, fleeth before it, only to find himself stopped by a mighty and raging river, whose flood he cannot hope to cross. Yet the man who had spoken, instead of immediate obedience, ventured further to urge his prayer with the intrepidity and hopeless courage of such despair.

'Who are we that we should weary the ears of the Father of the Great?' he went on. 'Yet, even a dog cannot entirely guard a house if he is but a small dog, and they who would enter are many and strong. He can but give warning of their approach—and this is what we have done. But the King's magicians are

with his short-handled spear. 'Return ye hence. For the rest of you—hearken now, Untúswa. Send one half of thy regiment of "Scorpions" under an experienced captain, that they may drive the whole of the people of Maqandi within this Ghost-Valley. Then let them draw a line across the mouth thereof, and slay every one who shall attempt to escape. So shall the people of Maqandi either slay this ghost or be slain by it. I care not which. Go!'

I rose to carry out the King's orders, and upon the faces of the grovelling messengers was an awful expression of set, hopeless despair. But, before I could creep through the low doorway, a sign from Umzilikazi caused me to halt. At the same time, a frightful hubbub arose from without—the hubbub of a volume of deep, excited voices—mingled with a wild bellowing, which was enough to make a man deaf.

'I think these ghost-bulls are upon us, too,' said the King, with an angry sneer. 'Look forth, Untúswa, and see whether all the world has gone mad.'

Quickly I gained the gate in the woven fence which surrounded the *isigodhlo*. From far and near people were flocking, while the great open space within the kraal was becoming more and more densely packed; and, making their way through the blackness of the crowd, which parted eagerly to give them passage, came a weird and hideous throng, decked with horrid devices of teeth and claws and the skulls of beasts,

their bodies hung with clusters of bleeding entrails and all the fooleries which our *izanusi* hang about themselves to strike terror into the fearful. These, leaping and bounding in the air, rushed forward till it seemed they were about to bear me down and pour into the *isigodhlo* itself. But they halted—halted almost in the very gate—and redoubled their bellowings, howling about the Valley of the Red Death and the woe which should come upon our nation. And all the people, their faces turned earthward, howled in response. Looking upon this, I bethought me that there seemed truth in the King's words, and that all the world had indeed gone mad. Making a sign to the *izanusi* to desist their howlings—a sign, however, which they did not obey—I returned to the royal presence to report what I had seen.

their sticks and shields. In very truth, *Nkose*, it seemed as though the whole nation were gathered there.

Suddenly a silence fell upon the multitude, and even the bellowing of the *izanusi* was stayed, as there came through the throng, creeping upon their hands and knees, nearly a score of men. Their leader was a fine and well-built warrior of middle age, whom I knew as a fierce and fearless fighter, and they had returned from 'eating up' the kraal of one of the subject tribes in accordance with the King's mandate. Now the leader reported having carried out his orders fully. The evil-doers were destroyed, their houses burnt, and their cattle swept off as forfeit to the King.

'It is well,' said Umzilikazi. 'Yet not for that ye have obeyed your orders has the whole nation gone mad.'

'There is more to tell, Great Great One,' answered the warrior, upon whose countenance, and upon the countenances of his band, I could descry signs of dread. 'In returning we had to pass through the land of Maqandi. Two of us fell to the Red Death.'

'To the Red Death?' repeated the King, speaking softly and pleasantly. 'Ha! How and where was that, Hlatusa?'

Then the leader explained how he had allowed two of his followers to wander into the Ghost Valley in pursuit of a buck they had wounded. They had not returned, and when sought for had been found lying

some little distance apart, each terribly ripped and covered with blood, as though they had been rolled in it.

'So?' said the King, who had been listening attentively with his head on one side. 'So, Hlatusa? And what did you do next, Hlatusa?'

'This, Black Elephant,' answered the man. 'Every corner of that *tagati* place did we search, but found in it no living thing that could have done this—ghost or other. In every cave and hole we penetrated, but nothing could we find, Father of the Wise.'

'In this instance, Father of the Fools,' sneered Umzilikazi, a black and terrible look taking the place of the pleasant and smiling expression his face had hitherto worn. 'Yet, stay. What else did you find there? No sign, perchance?'

Hlatusa, you I send forth at the head of twenty men, and you return, having lost two—not on the spears of a fighting enemy, but in strange fashion. And no one do ye hold accountable for this, but return with a child-tale about ghosts and the hoof-mark of a ghost-bull. *Hamba gahle,* Hlatusa. The alligators are hungry. *Take him hence!'*

With these fatal words the throng of slayers sprang forward to seize him. But Hlatusa waited not to be seized. Rising, he saluted the King; then turning, he stalked solemnly and with dignity to his doom—down through the serried ranks of the people, down through the further gate of the kraal, away over the plain, keeping but two paces in front of his guards. A dead silence fell upon all, and every face was turned his way. We saw him stand for a moment on the brow of the cliff which overhung the Pool of the Alligators, wherein evil-doers were cast. Then we saw him leap; and in the dead silence it seemed we could hear the splash—the snapping of jaws and the rush through the water of those horrible monsters, now ever ravening for the flesh of men.

CHAPTER II.

'BEHOLD THE SIGN!'

THE silence was broken by a long, muttering roll of thunder. Masses of dark cloud were lying low down on the further sky, but overhead the sun darted his beams upon us in all the brightness of his mid-day fierceness, causing the great white shield held above the King to shine like polished metal. To many of us it seemed that the thunder-voice, coming as it did, was an

indeed. Not until the murmurs became loud and deafening did he seem to notice them. Then the *izanusi*, deeming that their moment had come, took up the tale. Shaking their hideous ornaments and trappings, they came howling before the King; calling out that such dark witchcraft was within the nation as could not fail to destroy it. But upon these the Great Great One gazed with moody eyes, giving no sign of having heard them; and I, watching, wondered, for I knew not what was going to follow. Suddenly the King looked up.

'Enough of your bellowings, ye snakes, ye wizard cheats!' he thundered. 'I have a mind to send ye all into this Ghost Valley, to slay the thing or be slain by it. Say; why are ye not ridding me of this evil thing which has crept into the nation?'

'That is to be done, Ruler of the World!' cried the chief of the *izanusi*. 'That is to be done; but the evil-doer is great—great!'

'The evil-doer is great—great!' howled the others, in response.

'Find him, then, jackals, impostors!' roared the King. '*Whau!* Since old Masuka passed into the spirit-land never an *izanusi* have we known. Only a crowd of bellowing jackal-faced impostors.'

For, *Nkose*, old Masuka was dead. He had died at a great age, and had been buried with sacrifices of cattle as though one of our greatest chiefs. In him,

too, I had lost a friend, but of that have I more to tell.

Now some of the *izanusi* dived in among the crowd and returned dragging along several men. These crawled up until near the King, and lay trembling, their eyes starting from their heads with fear. And now, for the first time, a strange and boding feeling came over me, as I recognised in these some of the Bakoni, who had been at a distance when we stamped flat that disobedient race, and had since been spared and allowed to live among us as servants.

'Well, dogs! What have ye to say?' quoth the King. 'Speak, and that quickly, for my patience to-day is short.'

Whau, Nkose! They did speak, indeed, those dogs. They told how the Red Death was no new thing—at

to boil within me, as I saw through the ending of that tale. The darker mysteries of the Bakoni *múti!*—preluding the accession of a new king? The countenance of the Great Great One grew black as night.

'It is enough,' he said. 'Here among us, at any rate, is one to whom such mysteries are not unknown. The Queen of the Bakoni *múti*—who shall explain them better than she?'

The words, taken up by the *izanusi* and bellowed aloud, soon went rolling in chorus among the densely-packed multitude, and from every mouth went up shouts for Lalusini—the Queen of the Bakoni *múti*. Then, *Nkose*, the whole plot burst in upon my mind. Our witch doctors had always hated my *inkosikazi*, because she was greater than they; even as they had always hated me, because I had old Masuka on my side, and was high in the King's favour, and therefore cared nothing about them, never making them gifts. Now their chance had come, since old Masuka was dead and could befriend me no more, and my favour in the King's sight was waning. Moreover, they had long suspected that of Lalusini the Great Great One would fain be rid; yet not against her had they dared to venture upon the 'smelling out' in the usual way, lest she proved too clever for them; for the chief of the *izanusi* had a lively recollection of the fate of Notalwa and Isilwana, his predecessors. Wherefore they had carefully and craftily laid their plot, using for the

I could just see away against the hills
shouters had not long to shout, for aga
opened up, and through it there advanc
they sought.

No dread or misgiving was on the
beautiful wife, as she advanced with a ste
stately as became her royal blood. She
the King, then halted, and, with hand upr
the '*Bayéte*,' for no prostration or hum
address was Umzilikazi wont to exact f
daughter of Tshaka the Terrible, by r
mighty birth. Thus she stood before t
head slightly thrown back, a smile of entir
shining from her large and lustrous eyes.

'Greeting, Daughter of the Great,' sai
speaking softly. 'Hear you what these sa

'I have heard them, son of Matyobane,'

'Ha! Yet they spoke low, and thou
off,' went on the King craftily.

'*Hau!* It seems to me we have heard overmuch of that tale. Here, however, is a new tale, not an old one. What of the Red Death? Do these dogs lie?' pointing to the grovelling Bakoni.

Lalusini glanced at them for a moment—the deepest scorn and disgust upon her royal features—the disgust felt by a real magician for those who would betray the mysteries of their nation's magic, and I, gazing, felt I would rather encounter the most deadly frown that ever rested on the face of the King himself than meet such a look upon that of my *inkosikazi*, if directed against myself.

'They lie, Great Great One,' she answered shortly.

Then the King turned such a deadly look upon the crouching slaves that these cried aloud in their fear. They vociferated that they were telling the truth, and more—that they themselves had witnessed the operations of the Red Death among their own people; that Lalusini herself and her mother, Laliwa, had actually brought about the destruction of Tauane's predecessor by its means, and that that of Tauane himself had been decreed—that it always meant the accession of a new ruler.

Now I, sitting near Umzilikazi, knew well what was passing in his mind. As he grew older he had become more and more sour and suspicious. Now he was thinking that he himself was destined to die in blood, even as that Great One, Tshaka, had died, that

I, his second fighting induna, his favourite war-councillor, should succeed him, and so win back not only the seat of Matyobane, but the throne of Senzangakona for this sorceress—this splendid daughter of Tshaka the Terrible So, too, would the death of Tshaka be avenged. And in Umzilikazi's look I could read my own doom, and yet, *Nkose*, even at that moment not of myself did I think. I had only eyes for the tall, shapely form of my beautiful wife thus put upon her trial before the King and the whole nation. Then Umzilikazi spoke.

'It seems we have spared too many slaves of this race of *Abatagati*. Take these hence,' pointing to the grovelling Bakoni. 'The alligators are hungry.'

There was a roar of delight from all who heard. The slayers flung themselves upon the shrieking slaves, dragging them away by the heels as they rolled upon

fore our people could not restrain their hatred and contempt.

'Hold!' roared the King, before the slayers had quite dragged these dogs outside the kraal, and at his voice again silence fell upon the throng. 'Hold! After feeding upon the flesh of a brave man I will not that my alligators be poisoned with such carrion as this. There may yet be more royal meat for them,' he put in, in a lower tone, and with a savage and deadly sneer. Then, raising his voice, 'Let these dogs be taken up to yonder hill and burnt.'

A roar of delight broke from all, mingled with shouts of *bonga* as to the King's justice and wisdom. And none were more pleased, I thought, than the slayers, men of fierce and savage mind, who, from constantly meting out torture and death, loved their occupation the more the further they pursued it.

For awhile there was silence. Away upon a round-topped hillock, within sight of all, the slayers were collecting great piles of dry wood, and upon these the condemned slaves were flung, bound. Then amid the fierce roar and crackle of the flames wild tortured shrieks burst from those who writhed there and burned, and to the people the shrieks were the pleasantest of sounds, for the terror of the Red Death had strangely fastened upon all minds, and they could not but hold that these who thus died had in some way brought the curse of it upon them.

Again upon the stillness arose a long roll of thunder —this time loud and near, for the great cloud which had been lying low down upon the further sky was now towering huge and black, almost above the very spot where burned those wretches, and the pointed flash which followed seemed to dart in and out of the smoke which rose from the crackling wood pile. The multitude, watching, began to murmur about an omen.

'Talk we now of this thing of evil,' said Umzilikazi, at last. 'Thou, Lalusini, art a pestilent witch. For long hast thou been among us. For long has thy greatness been honoured, thou false prophetess, whose promise is as far from fulfilment as ever. Now thou shalt travel the way of those whose predictions are false.'

Black and bitter wrath was in the King's mind. Hardly could he contain himself, hardly could he speak

teeth showing white between parted lips, and away beyond this the heavy smoke-wreath mounting from the glowing wood-pile, the cries and groans of the expiring slaves, the blackness of the thunder cloud, the fierce pale glare of the sun upon the assegais of the armed guard, and upon the blaze of white of the great shield held above the King. *Yeh-bo*—I see it all—the angry infuriated countenance of Umzilikazi, the dread anxiety on the faces of the other *izinduna*, which was as the shrinking before a great and terrible storm about to burst. *Hau!* and I see more. I see, as I saw it then, the face of my beautiful wife, Lalusini, Daughter of the Mighty—as she stood there before the Great One, in whose hand was death—proud, fearless, and queenly. And she was awaiting her doom.

Now she threw back her head, and in her eyes shone the light which must ofttimes have shone in the eyes of that Mighty One from whom she had sprung. Then she spoke:

'In the hand of the King is death, and even the greatest of those who practise sorcery cannot withstand such—at least not always. But know this, son of Matyobane, with my death shall utterly perish all hope of the seat of Senzangakona to thee and thine. Further, know that, without my help, the very House of Matyobane shall in two generations be rooted up and utterly destroyed, scattered to the winds, and the people of the Amandebeli shall become even as Amaholi to those who are stronger.'

Those who heard these words murmured in awe, for over Lalusini's face had come that inspired look which it wore when the spirit of divination was on her. But the King was beside himself with fury, and his features were working as those of a man who has gone mad.

'So!' he hissed. 'So! And I sit in my seat only by permission of a witch—by permission of one who is greater than I! So I am no longer a King!' he mocked. 'Yet two bulls cannot rule in one kraal. So, sister, thou shalt have a high throne to rule this nation from—as high a throne as had the traitor Tyuyumane before thee.' Then raising his voice—for they had hitherto talked in a tone low enough to be heard only by the King and the few who sat in attendance round him—'Make ready the stake—the

among the *izinduna*, unarmed and listening, knew that never, since the day of his birth, had he gone in such peril of instant death as at that moment when he sat there, his own broad spear in his right hand, and guarded by the shields and gleaming assegais of his body-guard—pronouncing the words which should consign my *inkosikazi* to a death of shame and of frightful agony. For the spell of Lalusini's witchcraft lay potent and sweet upon my soul—and I was mad—yet not so mad but that as I sat there unarmed, I could measure the few paces that intervened between myself and the Great Great One—*could mark how carelessly he held the broad-bladed spear within his grasp.*

Even the slayers—for not all had gone forth to the burning of the Bakoni—even the slayers stared as though half stupefied, hesitating to lay hands upon that queenly form, standing there erect and unutterably majestic. Upon us the spell of the moment was complete. We leaned forward as we sat, we *izinduna*, and for the rest of us it was as though stone figures sat there watching, not living men of flesh and bones. For myself, I know not how I looked. But how I felt—ah! it was well my thoughts were buried. The armed guards, too, seemed bewildered with awe and amazement. The moment had come. The Red Death had indeed presaged the accession of a new King—but for the daughter of Tshaka the Mighty, the swift and merciful stroke of a royal spear should end her life,

instead of the stake of agony and shame. For myself I cared not. I was mad. The whole world was whizzing round.

Through it all I heard the voice of Lalusini.

'Pause a moment, Ruler of the Great,' she was saying, and her voice was firm and sweet and musical as ever, and utterly without fear. 'Pause a moment for a sign.'

She had half turned, and with one hand was pointing towards the ascending smoke-cloud towering above the hill of death. A sharp, crashing peal of thunder shook the world, and the lightning-gleam seemed to flash down right upon the smouldering pile. A silence was upon all as, with upturned faces, King, *izinduna*, guards, slayers, the whole multitude sat motionless, waiting for what should next befall. Not long had we

the tortured slaves, whirling them in a mighty shower far and wide over the plain. Those of the slayers who still lingered around the spot lay as dead men.

'Behold the sign, O son of Matyobane!' cried Lalusini, in clear, ringing tones, turning again to the King. 'Yonder are the dogs who lied against me. The heavens above would not suffer their very bones to rest, but have scattered them far and wide over the face of the world. No others have met with harm.'

Now all began to cry aloud that indeed it was so; and from the multitude a great murmur of wonderment went up. For then those of our men who had been struck down were seen to rise and walk slowly down towards the kraal—stupified, but alive and unharmed. Then I, who could no longer sit still, came before the King.

'A boon, Great Great One,' I cried. 'Suffer me to go and root out this mystery of the Red Death, and slay for ever this evil thing that causeth it; I alone. So shall it trouble the land no more.'

A hum of applause rose from among my fellow *izinduna*, who joined with me in praying that my undertaking be allowed.

'Ever fearless, Untúswa,' said the King, half sneering; yet I could see that the wrathful mood was fast leaving him. 'Yet thou art half a magician thyself, and this thing seems a thing of fearful and evil witchcraft. But hear me. Thou shalt proceed to the

Valley of the Red Death, but with no armed force; and before this moon is full thou shalt slay this horror, that its evil deeds may be wrought no more. If success is thine, it shall be well with thee and thine; if failure, thou and thy house shall become food for the alligators; and as for thine *inkosikazi*, the stake which she has for the time being escaped shall still await her. I have said it, and my word stands. Now let the people go home.'

With these words Umzilikazi rose and retired within the *isigodhlo*, and, as the rain began to fall in cold torrents, in a very short time the open space was clear, all men creeping within the huts to take shelter and to talk over the marvel that had befallen. But while only the *izanusi* retired growling with discontent, all men rejoiced that Lalusini had so narrowly escaped what had

CHAPTER III.

AN OMINOUS PARTING.

You will see, *Nkose*, that my times now were stormy and troublesome, and indeed I have ever observed that as it is with nations and people so it is with individuals. There comes a time when all is fair—all is power and strength and richness—then comes a decline, and neither nation nor individual is as before.

Such a time had come upon myself. After the battle of the Three Rifts, when we had rolled back the might of Dingane—a matter, indeed, wherein I had fully borne my part—there had followed a time of great honour and of rest. I was, next to the King, the greatest man in the nation, for Kalipe, the chief fighting induna, was getting on in age, and would fain have seen me in his place, having no jealousy of me. I had taken to wife the beautiful sorceress whose love I had longed to possess; moreover, the King had rid me of Nangeza, whose tongue and temper had become too pestilent for any m[illegible] bear aught of. My cattle had

increased, and spread over the land, and they who owned me as chief were many, and comprised some of the best born and of the finest fighting men in the nation. Yet this was not to last, and as age and security increased for Umzilikazi, his distrust of me gained too, and now I knew he would almost gladly be rid of me, and quite gladly of Lalusini, my principal wife. Yes. To this had things come. I, Untúswa, the second in command of the King's troops, who had largely borne part in the saving of our nation, who had even been hailed as king by the flower of the Zulu fighting indunas, had now to set out upon a ghost hunt, and, in the event of failure, the penalty hanging over me was such as might have fallen upon a miserable cheat of an *izanusi*.

Thus pondering I took my way back to my principal

me that Lalusini looked just as when I first beheld her in the rock cave high up on the Mountain of Death. Time had gone by since I had taken her to wife, yet she seemed not to grow old as other women do. My two former wives, Fumana and Nxope, were no longer young and pleasing, but Lalusini seemed ever the same. Was it her magic that so kept her? She had borne me no children, but of this I was rather glad than otherwise, for we loved each other greatly, and I desired that none should come between to turn her love away from me, as children would surely do. For my other wives it mattered nothing, but with Lalusini it was different. I loved her, *Nkose*, as some of you white people love your women. *Whau!* Do you not allow your women to walk side by side with you instead of behind? This I have seen in my old age. And those among us who have been at Tegwini * tell strange tales of white men who go out with their women, that they might load themselves with all the little things their women had bought from the traders. Few of us could believe that, *Nkose*—the tale is too strange; and yet it was somewhat after this manner that I loved Lalusini—I, the second induna of the King's warriors, I, who since I was but a boy had slain with my own hand more of the King's enemies than I could count. I, moreover, who had known what the ingratitude and malice of women could do, in the person of my first wife, Nangeza, for whom I had sacrificed my fidelity to the King and

* Durban.

the nation—even my life itself. But with Lalusini, ah! it was very different. No evil or sullen mood was ever upon her; nor did she ever by look or word give me to understand that a daughter of the House of Senzangakona, the royal house of Zululand, might perchance be greater than even the second induna of a revolted and fugitive tribe, now grown into a nation. Even her counsels, which were weighty and wise, she would put forward as though she had not caused me to win the White Shield—had not saved our nation at the Place of the Three Rifts.

'It seems to me, Lalusini,' I said at last, 'it seems to me that in this nation there is no longer any room for us two. I have served Umzilikazi faithfully and well. I have more than once snatched back the life of the King, when it was tottering on the very brink of the

down more of the enemies of our nation than the King himself. One royal spear—one white shield is as good to sit under as another; and—it is time our new nation sat down under its *second* king.'

'Great dreams, Untûswa,' said Lalusini, with a smile that had something of sadness in it.

'Great acts shouldst thou say rather, for I am no dreamer of dreams,' I answered bitterly. 'Ha! do I not lead the whole nation in war? for, of late, Kalipe is old, and stiff in the limbs. One swift stroke of this broad spear, and the nation will be crying "*Bayéte*" to him who is its leader in war. Ah! ah! What has happened before can happen again.'

But here I stopped, for I was referring darkly to the death of that Great Great One, the mighty Tshaka, from whose loins my *inkosikazi* had sprung. Yet no anger did she show.

'So shall we be great together at last, Lalusini, and my might in war, and thy *múti* combined, shall indeed rule the world,' I went on. 'Ha! I will make believe to go on this *tagati* business, but to-night I will return in the darkness, and to-morrow—*whau*!—it may indeed be that the appearance of the Red Death has presaged the accession of a new King—even as those dogs, who were burnt to-day, did declare. How now for that, Lalusini?'

'The throne of Dingiswayo is older than that of Senzangakona, and both are older than that of Matyo-

bane,' she answered. 'Yet I know not—my *múti* tells me that the time is not yet. Still, it will come—it will come.'

'It will come—yes, it will come—when we two have long since been food for the alligators,' I answered impatiently. 'The King's word is that I slay this horror—this *tagati* thing—by the full of the moon. What if I fail, Lalusini?'

'Fail? Fail? Does he who rolled back the might of the Twin Stars of Zulu talk about failure? Now, nay, Untúswa—now, nay,' she answered, with that strange and wonderful smile of hers.

'I know not. Now cast me "the bones," Lalusini, that I may know what success, if any, lieth before me against the Red Terror.'

'The bones? Ha! Such methods are too childish

spoke—and her voice was as the voice of one who talks in a dream.

'See thou part not from this, Untúswa. Yet seek not to look within—until such time as thy wit and the wit of others fail thee—or the *múti* will be of no avail—nay more, will be harmful. But in extremity make use of what is herein—in extremity only—when at thy wit's end.'

Still held by her eyes, I reached forth my hand and took the *múti* bag, securing it round my neck by a stout leather thong which formed part of the hide from whence the bag had been cut. As I did so, Lalusini murmured of strange things—of ghost caves, and of whole impis devoured in alligator-haunted swamps—and of a wilder, weirder mystery still, which was beyond my poor powers of understanding—I being but a fighter and no *izanusi* at all. Then her eyes grew calm, and with a sigh as of relief she was herself again.

Now I tried to go behind what she had been saying, but it was useless. She had returned from the spirit world, and being once more in this, knew not what she had seen or said while in the other. Even the *múti* pouch, now fastened to my neck, she glanced upon as though she had never seen it before.

'Go now, Untúswa,' she said.

We embraced each other with great affection, and Lalusini with her own hands armed me with my weapons—the white shield, and the great dark-handled assegai which was the former gift of the King, also my

heavy knobkerrie of rhinoceros horn, and three or four light casting spears—but no feather crest or other war adornments did I put on. Then I stepped forth.

No armed escort was to accompany me, for I must do this thing alone. But I had chosen one slave to bear such few things as I should require. Him I found awaiting me at the gate of the kraal.

It was evening when I stepped forth—evening, the busiest and cheeriest time of the day—yet my kraal was silent and mournful as though expecting every moment the messengers of death. The cattle within their enclosure stood around, lowing impatiently, for the milking was neglected; and men, young and old, sat in gloomy groups, and no women were to be seen. These murmured a subdued farewell, for not only was I, their chief and father, about to sally forth upon an errand of

appeared into gloom and distance. *Au!* I can see her now, my beautiful wife, as she stood there, her tall and splendid form robed as it were in waving flames of fire, where the last glory of the dying sun fell full upon her. And through the dazzle of this darting light, her gaze was fixed upon me, firm and unflinching. Yes, I can see her now as I saw her then, and at times in my dreams, *Nkose*, old man as I am, my heart feels sore and heavy and broken as it did then. For as I returned her parting gesture of farewell, and plunged into the forest shades, at that moment a voice seemed to cry in my ears that I should behold her no more. In truth was I bewitched.

'Will you not rest awhile, lord, and suffer me to prepare food, for we have travelled fast and far?'

The voice was that of my attendant slave, and it struck upon my ears as a voice from the spirit world, so wrapped up was I in the gloom of my own thoughts. Now I glanced at the sky and judged the night to be more than half through. And we had marched since the setting of the sun. But the light of the half moon was sufficient for us, for the forest trees were of low stature and we were seldom in complete darkness.

'Rest awhile? Not so, Jambúla,' I answered. 'Are we not on the King's errand? and from hence to the full of the moon is not far.'

'The forest is loud with the roarings of strange

ghost-beasts, my father; and the time of night when such have most power must already be here. And we are but two,' he urged, though with great deference.

'And what are such to me—to me!' I answered, 'I who am under the protection of great and powerful *múti?* Go to, Jambúla. Art thou turning fearful as time creeps upon thee?'

'I fear nothing within touch of thy *múti*, father,' he answered, liking not the question.

And then, indeed, I became alive to the meaning of the man's words, for strange and fearful noises were abroad among the shadows on either hand, low sad wailings as of the ghosts of them that wander in darkness and pain, mingling with the savage howls of ramping beasts into whose grim bodies the spirits of many fighters had passed, to continue their fierce war-

Then the beast crouched. It was of enormous size in the half light. Was it only a lion—or a ghost-beast, which would spread and spread till its hugeness overshadowed the world? If the latter, mere weapons were powerless against it.

Jambúla stepped to my side, every muscle of his frame tense with the excitement of the moment. His shield was thrust forward, and his right hand gripped the haft of a broad-bladed stabbing spear. But I—no movement did I make towards using a weapon. I advanced straight upon the beast, and as I did so, some force I knew not caused my hand to rest upon the *múti* bag which hung upon my breast.

With a snarling roar the beast moved forward a little, preparing for its rush. We were but ten paces apart. Then the fierce lashing of the tail ceased, the awful eyes seemed to glare with fear where rage had fired them before—the thunder of the threatening roar became as the shrill whine of a crowd of terrified women—and, backing before me as I advanced, the huge beast slunk away in the cover, and we could hear its frightened whinings growing fainter and fainter in the distance.

By this, *Nkose*, two things were clear—that the shape, though that of a huge and savage lion, was but a shape to give cover to something which was not of this world—and that Lalusini's *múti* was capable of accomplishing strange and wonderful results.

CHAPTER IV.

THE ABODE OF THE TERROR.

THROUGH the whole of the following day, and the night after, we travelled; and on the next morning, before the sun had arisen, we came upon a large kraal. The land lay enshrouded in heavy mist, and the hoarse barking of many dogs sounded thick and muffled. Armed men sprang to the gate to inquire our errand,

and who was, moreover, the second in command of the King's army. But it seemed to me that fear was in his mind, for he could not think that an induna of my rank would arrive alone, attended by one slave, and I think he expected every moment the signal which should bring my followers swarming into the kraal to put him and his to the assegai and his possessions to the flames.

'What is the will of the Great Great One, son of Ntelani?' he said, as we sat together within his hut alone. '*Hau!* I am an old man now, and troubles grow thick on every side. I have no people, and am but taskmaster over a set of miserable slaves—I, who fought with the assegai and led warriors to victory at the Place of the Three Rifts, even as you did yourself, Untúswa. Yes, troubles are upon me on every side, and I would fain sit down at rest within the Dark Unknown.'

I looked at Maqandi, and I pitied him. He had, indeed, grown old since we had fought together in that great battle. His face was lined and his beard had grown grey; and his hair—which, being in some measure in disgrace, he had neglected to shave—seemed quite white against the blackness of his head-ring. Yet with all his desire to sleep the sleep of death, there was in his eyes a look of fear; such a look as may be descried in the faces of those to whom the witchfinder's rod draws very near. Yes, I pitied him.

'The will of the Great Great One is not with thee for the present, Maqandi,' I said, desiring to reassure nim. 'Now, hearken, and give me such aid as I need, and it may be that the head-ring of the son of Mahlu may yet shine once more in its place among the nation.'

'Ha! Sayest thou so, holder of the White Shield?' he answered quickly, a look of joy lighting up his face. 'Is not all I have at the disposal of the second induna of the King?'

'That is rightly said, Maqandi,' I replied. 'For never yet did I fail those who did well by me. And now we will talk.'

I unfolded my plan to the chief over the ironworkers, and as I did so his face grew sad and heavy again—for I could see he doubted my success in ridding the land

point in the heavens. My slave Jambúla was already waiting and armed before the door of my hut. Beside him, too, were those I required to be in attendance. Both went before me, uttering words of *bonga*.

'Why are these armed?' I said, noting that the two ironworkers carried spears and axes. 'I need no armed force. Let them leave their weapons here.'

A look of fear spread over the faces of both slaves at these words, and they reckoned themselves already dead men. For although weapons could be of no avail against a thing of *tagati* and of terror, such as had already laid low so many of their number, and indeed two of our own tried warriors, in a death of blood, yet it is in the nature of man to feel more confident when his hand holds a spear. But at my word they dropped their weapons and stood helpless.

Now, *Nkose*, not without reason did I so act. The King's word had been that I should slay this horror accompanied by no armed force, and although two such miserable fighters as this race of slaves could supply were of no more use with arms in their hands than without, yet I would not give Umzilikazi any chance of saying I had not fulfilled his conditions. Besides, I had a purpose to which I intended putting these two, wherein weapons would avail them nothing at all.

I took leave of Maqandi-ka-Mahlu and set forth—I and Jambúla and the two workers in iron. Such men of our people as I encountered saluted me in gloomy

silence, and as I passed the kraals of the iron-workers the people came forth and prostrated themselves on the ground, for my importance was twofold; I represented the majesty of the King, and further, some inkling had got abroad that my errand lay to investigate, and, if possible, bring to an end the terror of the Red Magic.

From the kraal of Maqandi we could already see the great mountain range in whose heart lay the locality of this terror, and shortly, ere the last rays of the sun faded from the world, we stood before a dark and narrow defile. We had left behind the dwellings of men, though plentiful traces of their occupation would meet our eyes, being left by the iron-working parties. Through this defile a thin trickle of water ran, though in times of rain and storm the place showed signs of

keen and searching as it was, descry any means by which a man might find a way out.

The bottom of this strange valley was nearly level, and well grown with tall forest trees and undergrowth; not so thick, however, but that there were grassy open spaces, bestrewn with large rocks and boulders. But from the level floor of the hollow rose little or no slope. The great iron faces of the cliffs rose immediately, either in terraces or soaring up to a great height. Such was the aspect of the Valley of the Red Death.

That it was indeed the dreaded valley, the looks on the faces of the two iron-workers were sufficient to show. But I, gazing earnestly around and noting that there was but one way in or out, reckoned that the first part of my errand would not be hard—to find the accursed thing. Then a further examination of the cliffs, and I felt not so sure, for irregularly along their faces were black spots of all shapes and sizes. These were the mouths of caves.

Now, as we stood there, the light of day had all but faded from the world, and already one or two stars were peeping over the rim of the vast cliff-wall rearing up misty and dim to the height of the heavens. Little sound of life was there, from bird, or beast, or insect; and this of itself added to the grey and ghostly chill which seemed to brood over the place; for in that country night was wont to utter with more voices than day. But the golden bow of a young moon, bright and

clear, gave a sufficient light to make out anything moving, save under the black darkness of the trees.

'What is thy name?' I said suddenly, turning to one of the slaves.

'Suru, father,' he replied.

'Well then, Suru, attend,' I said. 'Remain here, in this open space beside this small rock, and stir not hence until I send for or call thee. To fail in thy orders in the smallest particular is death.'

But the man sank on the ground at my feet.

'Slay me now, father,' he entreated, 'for death by one blow of the spear of the mighty do I prefer to the awfulness and horror of the death which shall come upon me here alone.'

'But death by one blow of the spear shall not be thy portion, oh fool,' I answered, mocking him. 'Ah, ah!

though more helpless. If Suru will not keep his watch a free man he shall keep it bound. Ah, ah!'

That settled all his doubts. As Jambúla made a step towards him, Suru cried out to me to pardon his first hesitation, and to allow him to obey my orders at any rate unbound. I agreed to this, for he was frightened enough, and indeed, *Nkose*, as he moved away to take up the position I had assigned to him, his look was that of one who stands on the brink of the Pool of the Alligators with the slayers beside him.

Leaving Suru to his solitary post, I moved back with Jambúla and the other slave to near the neck of the narrow passage by which we had entered the hollow, for I wanted to see whether the thing of dread came in when night fell, or whether it abode within the place itself. This we could do, for I chose a position a little way up the hillside, whence, by the light of the moon, I could command a clear space over which anything approaching from without could not but pass. So we sat beneath a cluster of rocks, and watched, and watched.

Night had fallen, mysterious and ghostly. The stars burned bright in the heavens, yet it seemed as though some black cloud of fear hung above, blurring their light. From the open country far beyond came the cry of hyænas, and the sharp barking yelp of the wild hunting dog calling to its mates; but in the drear gloom of this haunted valley, no sound of bird or

beast was there to break the silence. So the night watches rolled on.

I know not whether I slept, *Nkose*; it may be that I partly did; but there came a feeling over me as of the weight of some great terror, and indeed it seemed to hold me as though I could not move. Was it an evil dream? Scarcely, for, as with a mighty effort, I partly threw off the spell, my glance fell upon the face of Jambúla.

He was gazing upward—gazing behind him—gazing behind him and me. His jaw had fallen as that of a man not long dead, and his eyeballs seemed bursting from their sockets, and upon his face was the same awful look of fear as that worn by the slave, Suru, when left to his solitary watch. I followed his glance, and then I too felt the blood run chill within me.

second commander of the King's armies, felt my heart as water within me. But before I could decide on any plan the thing vanished—vanished as I gazed.

It was coming round the rocks, of course. In a moment we should receive its onslaught, and three more would be added to the number of the victims of the Red Death.

But—after? I thought of my beautiful wife, writhing her life out upon the stake of agony. I thought of my kinsmen and followers given over to the death of the alligators, and in a moment my heart grew strong again. I felt nerved with the strength of ten men. Let the thing come; and gripping my broad assegai, the royal spear, and my great white shield, the royal gift, I stood above the two scared and cowering slaves, ready to give battle to this terror from the unseen world. And in the short space of silence, of waiting, it seemed that I lived the space of my whole life.

But as I thus waited there rang forth upon the night a shrill, wild echoing yell—such a cry as might issue from the throat of one suffering such unheard of torments as the mind of man could ever invent. It pealed forth again louder, more quavering, rending the night with its indescribable notes of terror and agony—and it rose from where we had left the slave, Suru, to keep his grisly watch alone in the blackness of the forest. There was silence, but immediately that was

rent by another sound—a terrible sound, too—the savage growling roars as of an infuriated bull—receding further and further from the place whence the death cry had arisen, together with a crashing sound as though a great wind were rushing away further and further up the haunted valley.

For long did that fearful death-yell ring in my ears, as I stood throughout the night watches, grasping my spear, every moment expecting the onslaught of the thing—for, of course, it would return, where more victims awaited. Then the thought came to me that it only dared attack and slay the unarmed; that at the sight of a warrior like myself, armed and ready for battle, it had retired to vent its rage upon an easier prey; and this thought brought strength and encouragement, for I would find no great difficulty in slaying

With spear held ready, and none the less alert because it was day, and the valley was now flooded with the broad light of the sun, I quickly made my way down, followed by Jambûla and the other, to where I had left the slave the night before. It was as I thought. There he lay—dead; crushed and crumpled into a heap of body and limbs. He had tried to run. I could see that by the tracks, but before he had run ten steps the terrible ghost-bull had overtaken him and flung him forward. The great hole made by the entering horn gaped wide between his ribs, and, tearing forward, had half ripped him in two. The grass around was all red and wet with half-congealed blood, and in the midst, imprinted deep and clear as in the muddy earth after rain, two great hoof marks, and those of such a size as to be imprinted by no living animal.

So now I had seen with my own eyes a victim of the terror of the Red Death, and now I myself must slay this horror. But how to slay a great and terrible ghost—a fearful thing not of this world?

CHAPTER V.

GASITYE THE WIZARD.

For long I stood there thinking. I looked at the ground, all red and splashed with blood. I looked at the distorted body of the dead slave and the great gaping wound which had let out the life—the sure and certain mark of the dreaded Red Death—always dealt as it was, in the same part of the body—and for all my

spoken while her spirit was away among the spirits of those unseen?

'Remain here,' I said suddenly, to Jambúla and the other slave. 'Remain here, and watch, and stir not from this spot until I return.'

They made no murmur against this—yet I could see they liked not the order. But I gave no thought to them as I moved forward with my eyes fixed upon the tracks of the retreating monster.

The bloody imprint of the huge hoofs was plain enough, and to follow these was a work of no difficulty. Soon, however, as the hoofs had become dry, it was not so easy. Remembering the crashing noise I had heard as the thing rushed on its course, I examined the bushes and trees. No leaves or twigs were broken off such as could not but have happened with such a heavy body plunging through them. Then the hoof-marks themselves suddenly ceased, and with that, *Nkose*, the blood once more seemed to tingle within me, for if the thing had come no further was it not lying close at hand—those fiery eyes perhaps at that very moment watching me—those awful horns even now advancing silent and stealthy to rip and tear through my being? Ha! It seemed to me that this hunting of a terrible ghost was a thing to turn the bravest man into a coward.

Then as I stood, my hearing strained to its uttermost, my hand gripping my broad spear ready at any

rate to fight valiantly for life, and all that life involved, something happened which well-nigh completed the transformation into a coward of a man who had never known fear.

For now a voice fell upon my ears—a voice low and quavering, yet clear—a voice with a strange and distant sound as though spoken afar off.

'Ho! fearless one who art now afraid! Ho! valiant leader of armies! Ho! mighty induna of the Great King! Thou art as frightened as a little child. Ha, ha, ha!'

This last was very nearly true, *Nkose*—but hearing it said, and the hideous mocking laugh that followed, very nearly turned it into a lie.

'I know not who speaks,' I growled, 'save that by the voice it is a very old man. Were it not so he should

me rose a great rock wall. I had reached the base of one of the heights which shut in the hollow.

'Welcome, Untúswa,' cackled the voice again. 'Art thou still afraid?'

Now, *Nkose*, I could see nobody; but remembering the Song of the Shield, and how Lalusini had caused it to sound forth from the cliff to hearten us during the battle—she herself being some way off—I was not so much amazed as I might have been, for the voice came right out of the cliff.

'If thou art not afraid, Untúswa,' it went on, 'advance straight, and touch the rock with thy right hand.'

I liked not this order, but, *Nkose*, I had ever had to do with magicians, and had dipped somewhat into their art, as I have already shown. Here, I thought, was more sorcery to be looked into, and how should I root out the sorcery of the Red Magic save by the aid of other sorcery? So I advanced boldly, yet warily. And then, indeed, amazement was my lot.

For, as my right hand touched it, the hard rock moved, shivered. Then a portion of this smooth, unbroken wall seemed to fall inward, leaving a black gaping hole like a doorway, through which a man might enter upright.

'Ho, ho! Untúswa!' cackled the voice again, now from within the hole. 'Welcome, valiant fighter. Enter. Yet, wilt thou not leave thy weapons outside?'

'Not until I stand once more in the presence of him who sent me do I disarm, O Unknown One. And now, where art thou? for I like better to talk to a man with a voice than to a voice without the man.'

'And how knowest thou that I am a man, O Fearless One? Yet, enter, weapons and all. Ha! Knowest thou not *this* voice?'

Whau! It seemed to me then that my flesh crept indeed, for I did know that voice. Ah, yes, well indeed; and it was the voice of one who had long since sat down in the sleep of death—the voice of old Masuka, the mightiest magician our nation had ever seen.

Then, indeed, did I enter, for, even though dead, the voice was that of one who had done naught but well by me during life, and I feared not a change the other way now. I entered, and, as I did so, I stood in darkness

or of the wrath of kings, make thy face cold as it now is? Ha, ha!'

True indeed were the words, for the position was fearful; but then so was that which had been the means of driving me into it. But I answered:

'I have seen strange and mysterious and terrifying things before, my father, else would I fear greatly now. Yet let us talk face to face.'

For a moment there was no reply, then with startling suddenness a light flashed forth. On the floor just in front of me burned a small fire—throwing a ball of green misty light upon the tomb-like blackness. Within this I could make out the figure of a man—a very old man.

A man, did I say? *Whau!* It was more like that of a monkey, or a great crouching spider. The limbs were thin as the shaft of a spear—too withered and dried even to show the wrinkles of age; the face, too, was like a dry piece of skin spread over the skull; and on the head a wisp or two of white hair. If it was a man, in truth he must have lived nearly as long as the world itself. His hands, which were like the claws of a bird, were spread over the fire, which burned not upon the floor, but in a large clay bowl. Into this he seemed to be sprinkling some kind of powder which caused the green flame to leap and hiss.

But now another sound stopped my ears; an awe-

some and terrible sound—a sound full of fear and agony indescribable—for it was again the death-yell, such as I had heard in the darkness of the night when the slave, Suru, looked upon the Red Terror and parted with life. And now it was not night, but broad, clear, golden day—outside the cavern at least—and the other slave had parted with life by the same dread means; and I—while this thing of horror was abroad—this monster I had come to slay—here was I imprisoned within the heart of the earth—held there at the will of a being who seemed less a man than the ghost of one who had died while the world was yet young. I leaped to my feet.

'Ha, ha, ha! Sit again, induna of the King, who knows not fear,' cackled the shrivelled old monkey before me. 'Ha, ha, ha! But now I think thou art afraid.'

front of me. For the whole vault was filled with a vivid green flash, and in it the wizard seemed to dissolve.

His shrivelled limbs seemed to turn into black, horrible snakes, which glided away hissing into the darkness beyond; then the light sank somewhat, and before me there started up faces dim and shadowy, and their aspect turned my heart into water indeed, for I was gazing upon the faces of those I knew had long been dead.

Dim and shadowy as they were, I knew them all, knew them at first sight. There was Hlatusa, who had been sent to 'feed the alligators' by reason of this very magic I was here to destroy. There was Tyuyumane, who had conspired with the Amabuna to overthrow our nation; and Notalwa, the chief of our *izanusi*, who had aided him, both faces wreathed with hate and torture as I had last beheld them, writhing on the stake of impalement. There were many others who had died for the conspiracy of Ncwelo's Pool. There was the face of my brother, Sekweni—he who had been slain for sleeping at his post—and that of Gungana, the induna whom I myself slew, and to whose command I had succeeded. All these were glowering upon me with a very whirlwind of hate and vengeance, and I—*whau*!—I was as a man who had died ten deaths. Then I saw the face of Tauane, the chief of the People of the Blue Cattle, and —Ha! what was that? The face of Lalusini, beautiful, but sad and agonised? Yet no. But as a flash I had

seen it, and lo! it became that of Nangeza, my erstwhile *inkosikazi*, even as when she had failed in her attempt upon the life of the King. And then indeed did I know what hate and vengeance could look like. For long it seemed I stood there face to face with that terrible countenance—with it alone—and my lungs now seemed to fill with choking fiery air. I beheld a vast array defiling before me—of warriors I had met in battle, of all races, but chiefly those of our parent nation. On, ever, they passed, silent grim spectres, with broad spear and tufted shield, even as in life. Others followed densely in rank, company upon company. *Hau!* Once more the battle! I heard the clash of shields, the shiver of assegai hafts, the flash and flame as of fire weapons. I saw the red blood spout and flow; I heard the roaring of an army of warriors in the full career of their victorious

CHAPTER VI.

THE GHOST-BULL.

I WAS not dead, *Nkose*; or, indeed, how should I be here telling you my story? Or, if I were—well, at any rate, the magic which had been powerful enough to draw me through the abode of those who had become ghosts was powerful enough to bring me back to life and to the world again—and yet I know not. It is a terrible thing to look upon the faces of those who have long been dead; and how shall a man—being a man—do this unless he join their number? Such faces, however, had I looked upon, for, as I opened my eyes once more to the light of the sun, no dim recollection of one who has slept and dreamed was mine. No; the mysterious cave, the magic fire, the fearsome sights I had beheld—all was real—as real as the trees and rocks upon which I now looked—as real as the sky above and the sun shining from it.

Yes; I was in the outer air once more. I rose and stood up. My limbs were firm and strong as before, my hand still grasped the broad spear—the white shield

lay at my feet. Before me was the smooth rock wall, there the exact spot where it had opened to receive me. But there it might remain, closed for ever, for all I cared. I had no wish to look further into its dark and evil mysteries. But now, again, the voice came back to my ears, faint and far away this time, but without the mocking mirth which had lured me before to what might have been my doom.

'Ho, Untúswa!' it cried; 'wouldst thou see more of the unseen? Wouldst thou look further into the future?'

'I think not, my father,' I answered. 'To those who deal in magic be the ways of magic, to warriors the ways of war—and I am a warrior.'

'And thine *inkosikazi*, Untúswa, what of her?'

'Help me to slay the ghost-bull who deals forth the

Now, when I heard the name of Gasitye, I knew it as the name of a great seer and prophet who dwelt alone among the mountains, and who was held in wide repute among all tribes and peoples, near and far. His own tribe nobody knew exactly, but it was supposed that his age was three times that of the oldest man known. Even Umzilikazi himself had more than once sent secretly to consult him, with gifts; for the rest, nobody cared to interfere with him, for even the most powerful of kings does not desire the enmity of a great and dreaded sorcerer, whose magic, moreover, is real, and not as that of the tribal *izanusi*—a cheat to encompass the death of men. And now I had encountered this world-famed wizard; had beheld him alone in the heart of the rock, whose face he had the power to open and shut at will.

'Help me to slay the ghost-bull, my father,' I entreated again.

'And when thou hast slain it—what then?'

'Then it shall be well with me and mine.'

'Well with thee and thine? Will it then—with thee and thine! Ha, ha!' repeated the voice within the cliff, in the same tone of mockery as before. 'Go now and slay it, Untúswa, thou valiant one. Go!'

I waited some little time, but no further answer could I obtain, though I spoke both loud and softly. Then I turned away.

As I did so a strange feeling came over me, a feeling

as of the faintness caused by starvation. The fumes of the wizard fire had worn off in the clear open air, and I felt as though I could spend the rest of my life eating, so hungry was I. So, losing no time, I started back to where I had left Jambúla.

Then upon my mind came the recollection of the death-yell I had heard when within the vault. Ha! I must proceed with care. I glanced upward. The sun was well up when I entered the rock; now it was at its highest overhead. I had not been as long in that vault of fear as it seemed.

Now there struck upon my nostrils a most horrible stench as of death and putrefaction. What did it mean? I had passed this spot this very morning and the air was pure and clear. Death might have taken

Now I heard a voice in salute, behind me—a voice I knew. Looking up, I beheld my slave, Jambúla.

He was looking strangely at me. Then he broke forth into extravagant words of welcome, and it seemed to me he had been badly frightened, and was glad enough to behold me once more. That was it, of course; so giving no further thought to the matter at all, I bade him find food. He had a number of speckled pigeons, which he had knocked over with his kerries; and having kindled a fire on the flat top of a high rock for safety's sake—*whau, Nkose!*—there was soon nothing left of those birds. The while Jambúla eyed me strangely.

Now this Jambúla—although my slave—was a man I held in great favour. He was not of any of the races we had conquered, but came of a tribe further to the southward than even the Zulu arms had ever reached. Him I had captured while storming the fortress of a mountain tribe, and the King had allotted him to me. He was a tall, strong man, and knew not fear, and was faithful and devoted to me as any dog. Now he said:

'I think *this* night must this thing of *tagati* be slain, my father.'

'We think the same, Jambúla,' I answered. 'But what I cannot quite think out is *how*. But that will come.'

'Nevertheless, let it be this night, father. I have a plan.'

This plan he then unfolded to me, and by the time

we had talked it out and around it was nearly dark—nearly time to set it working.

Never had any spot struck upon my mind as more ghostly and even terrifying than that haunted valley when night drew fairly down; and, *Nkose*, what I had seen and gone through in the wizard cave that morning seemed to have sapped my former fearlessness. A low-lying mist wreathed around the tree-stems and bushes, thick to near the height of a man, then thinning out dimly just enough to show out the twinkle of a star or two. But there was light enough for our purpose.

Hard by the place where Suru, the first slave, had been killed was an open space, thickly studded with rocks embedded in the earth, and one side of this open was overhung with mimosas of a good height and



I COULD SEE THE GIGANTIC HEAD OF THE GHOSTBEAST

one. And as I looked the mist suddenly rolled away, revealing the dark form of Jambúla, standing upright against a small rock.

For the moment the beast did not see him. It continued to run hither and thither in the moonlight, and as I marked its gigantic proportions, my heart sank, for I knew that to kill such a thing as this single-handed was very nearly the hardest task ever entrusted to me.

It was huge in the dim light—black as night, and as large as an elephant almost. There was that in the very size of the thing no less than in the glaring ferocity of its eyes—which was enough to turn a man's heart to water—for it could not be a thing of this earth. How, then, could it be slain?

Now it began to mutter, like the growlings of a heavy thunderstorm, as it ran to and fro, shaking its horrible head, and its dark, shaggy frontlet of hair. *Whau!* That was a fearful sight as the thing drew nearer. What of Jambúla? He had not moved, beyond half turning his head to get a better view of the horror. Would his heart fail him? I almost expected it would.

Ha! It had seen him. It dropped into a sort of stealthy crouch, more like that of a leopard or a lion than the movement of any horned animal; and thus it came up swiftly behind him.

But Jambúla was not asleep—oh no! There was no lack of wakefulness in him. In a moment he whirled

behind a rock, as the ghost-bull, uttering a roar that shook the world, came at him with the swiftness of a lightning flash.

Then began a scene indeed. Jambúla, watching his opportunity, flitted from rock to rock, but not less swiftly did the monster come after him—seeming to fly through the air as it leaped over some of the lower rocks which were in its way. *Hau!* Could this last? Would not Jambúla, out of breath, falter for one instant? Would not his foot stumble in the tortuous rapidity of his flight? *Au!* Did that happen he were lost—we both were lost.

Hither and thither he sped, the horrible beast ever behind him, roaring in a fashion to turn a man's heart to water—the foam flying from its mouth, the points of its huge horns tossing wildly, its savage eyes seeming

assegai into the joint of the spinal bone behind the skull.

Whau, Nkose! That was a moment. I know not quite what I expected to happen. I felt the point of the great horn, thrown backward, narrowly graze my side; then I was hurled through the air, as the huge body, arrested in mid course, turned right over, falling with its head twisted under its own enormous weight.

I was on my feet in a moment—not daring to think I had slain the monster—although I had felt the blade of my noble spear bite deep into the marrow. But there it lay, a huge black mass in the moonlight. While I stood contemplating it, still panting after my exertions and the fall, I heard the voice of Jambúla:

'That was well done, my father. Those horns will deal out the Red Death no more.'

'I know not whether a headless ghost may come to life again, Jambúla,' I said, 'but anyhow we will cut off the head of this one. But, first of all, this'—and I buried the blade of my great spear in the thing's heart.

We were both strong men, Jambúla and I, yet it was with a vast deal of labour we at last succeeded in cutting off the head, which was twisted under the huge body.

'*Whau!*' exclaimed Jambúla, gazing upon the great deluge of blood which poured forth upon the ground. 'It is as though the blood of all those slain by

the Red Death were flowing there. But now, father, suffer me to run to Maqandi's kraal and fetch slaves to carry this, and indeed, the skin and hoofs, to lay before the King, for we have no time to lose.'

'No time to lose!' I repeated. 'What mean you?'

He pointed upward with his blood-smeared assegai.

'The moon,' he said.

Then, indeed, *Nkose*, amazement was my lot—amazement and dismay. And well it might be. For last night the moon had not quite passed its first quarter. *To-night it was nearly full.*

Like one in a dream I gazed. Anything might be possible in this abode of *tagati*, but that the moon should change in one day from half to nearly full—*au!*

There was the moon, *Nkose*, within a day or two of full. It could not lie, even though Jambúla could. Stupidly I gazed at it, then at him.

'And how long ago is it that I left you, Jambúla?'

'Six days, father.'

Ha! Now I saw. Now everything was clear. The wizard, and the *múti* fire—the green, choking vapour that had filled my lungs and brain, causing me to see strange and fearful things—had kept me in a state of slumber. For six days I had lain within the heart of the rock, and I had thought it but the short part of one day. My hunger on my recovery—the state of putrefaction of the body of the slave whom I had supposed to have been slain only that morning—the change of the moon—all, indeed, stood clear enough now.

But whatever Jambúla may have imagined, it was not in my mind to tell him, or anybody, what had really happened, for it is not good among us for a man to have a name for dealings with *abatagati*. So I sent him off there and then to Maqandi's kraal, with orders to bring back a number of men immediately to flay the great ghost-bull and carry the hide, with the head and hoofs, before the King, without loss of time.

After he had gone, and while I sat alone in the haunted place, I watched by the great black mass lying so still and quiet; and, *Nkose*, I believe I should have felt little surprise had the thing come to life

again, head and all, so great was the awe it had set up among us. I am not even sure that I did not once or twice hear the voice of old Gasitye, and behold his spidery old form shambling among the trees. The dawn came at last, however, but before it came Jambúla, with a number of the iron-working slaves. These were in great delight over the slain monster who had destroyed so many of them, yet no time did I allow them to give way to their joy over dancing and such. It behoved us to return to the Great Great One with all speed, for on the next night the moon would be at full.

CHAPTER VII.

THE FAITH OF A KING.

THE news of what had been done had already spread fast and far, and before I reached Maqandi's kraal a great crowd of the iron-workers had assembled. These increased more and more, and presently a vast number of these people had joined in my train, dancing in their joy, and singing songs of triumph and of praise of myself, who had rid them of a twofold terror—of destruction by this thing of *tagati*, and of peril of wholesale death by the assegai when the patience of the King should become exhausted. But little attention did I pay to all this, for my allotted time had nearly expired, and it would be all I could do to reach Kwa'zingwenya ere it had quite. So I levied upon Maqandi for a large body of slaves, and pushed on, travelling night and day, and taking little or no rest.

No time even had I to visit my own kraal, which was somewhat off the line of my nearest road. However, I sent messengers there, and swift runners to

Kwa'zingwenya, that news of my success might reach the King as early as possible.

But as I travelled on swiftly through the night, whose dawn should see me laying my trophies at the feet of the Great Great One, my mind was torn by many misgivings, and many an anxious glance did I send upward to the heavens. *The moon was at the full.*

Fair and splendid rose the dawn of that day, and as I came in sight of our Great Place, and of the people flocking thither—for here, too, the news had spread, and all were eager to hear about what had been done, and, if possible, to behold the actual skin and horns of the great *tagati* beast—I forgot my fears, and felt proud and light-hearted as ever when I had accomplished something great. And thus I stalked into the great circle,

answer. 'But I may not go behind my orders. There is no safety that way.'

Now I liked not this reply. I noticed, moreover, that the guard before the *isigodhlo* was much larger than usual, and in those days, *Nkose*, anything unusual was likely to foreshadow trouble for somebody. Further, there was a shortness in the tone of the captain of the guard which sounded strange as addressed to one of my rank and influence. There was nothing for it, however, but patience, so I sat down to await the pleasure of the Great Great One.

As I sat there, taking snuff, I ran my eyes over those present, both near and far, seemingly with unconcern, but in reality with something of anxiety. Many of my own followers could I discern among the throng, and their women; but among these last was no sign of Lalusini. Yet this did not disconcert me, for of late my *inkosikazi* had rather avoided coming overmuch within the notice of the Great Great One.

Presently an *inceku* came out and spoke to the captain of the guard. Immediately it was proclaimed that the Great Great One was about to appear; and, preceded by the *izimbonga*, or praisers, bellowing the royal titles, Umzilikazi came forth and took his seat at the head of the great circle, where he was wont to sit each morning and discuss matters of state, or pronounce judgment on offenders.

As soon as the prostrate multitude had made an

end of shouting the royal praises I advanced to the King and made my report, leaving out, however, my experience of the witchcraft of Gasitye.

'Thou hast done well, Untúswa,' he said when I had concluded. 'Now bid them bring hither that head.'

This was done—and as Umzilikazi stood up the better to examine it, even he murmured in surprise at its gigantic size. And I, gazing upon the thing, black and huge, with its glazed eyes and swollen tongue and shaggy frontlet of hair, remembered the horrible and terrifying aspect of those vast, pointed horns, tossing and tearing in the glade of the moonlit forest.

'*Whau!* It stinks. Let them take it away,' said Umzilikazi at length, spitting in disgust, as a swarm of flies came buzzing about his face. 'And now, Untúswa, this thing will trouble the land no more?'

Untúswa,' he said, looking at me with his head bent sideways, and speaking in a soft tone.

'That is so, Great Great One. But the thing was both crafty and fierce.'

'Yet not alone didst thou slay it, as my conditions were,' he went on, pointing at me with his short-handled spear.

'Alone indeed did I slay it, Serpent of Wisdom,' I answered.

'Now thou liest, son of Ntelani. What of the slaves who were with thee?'

'They were but bait for the ghost-bull, Divider of the Sun; and both were duly slain by it,' I replied. But now I knew my feet were standing on slippery ground indeed—for never for a long time past had Umzilikazi spoken to me in that tone, and for a longer time still, in the sight and hearing of all men.

'And what of thy slave, Jambúla?' went on the King. 'Was he not armed?'

'No part did he take in slaying the thing, Father of the Wise. His part lay in running away.'

'Yet he was armed, and my condition laid down that no armed force should accompany thee.'

'*Au!* Now I would ask the Great Great One, the leader of the nations in war, whether one man, and he a slave, constitutes an armed force?' I replied, fully aware that whatever was in the King's mind towards

me, lack of courage never yet found favour in that mind.

'Let be, then,' he said. 'For that question we will let it rest. But say then, son of Ntelani—what of the moon? That this thing should be slain before the full of the moon—was not that one of my conditions? Yet the moon has been full these two nights.'

'But the thing was so slain, Black Elephant. Before the moon was full, was it slain.'

'But it should have been brought here by the full of the moon—the head, even as now. Well, well, Untúswa! It is not always possible to carry out conditions in their entirety, is it? Ah, ah! not always possible. Now go home, thou slayer of ghost-bulls, for it may be that I have even harder conditions awaiting thee than slaying *tagati* beasts. Go!'

me to give me news or talk over what had been done, and of my own followers none at all. These last would give me greeting from afar, and hurry onward; yet, by what I had done, I had saved them all from the death of the assegai. But it behoved me not, as a chief of great rank and influence, to show curiosity, and so, asking questions of no man, I eventually reached my kraal.

Then as I entered the gate, looking up towards my principal hut, it came back to me how I had last beheld Lalusini standing there in the setting sun to see the last of me, on that evening when I set forth on my errand of dread. Why was she not there now, waiting to welcome me? *Hau!* It seemed to send a chill through my being—a foreboding of all that was direful and deathly. Man of mature age and ripe experience as I was, even I could hardly restrain a quickening of the step as I paced across the open circle, returning the greetings of those who hailed my return.

Stooping through the doorway, I entered the hut. It was empty.

Everything was in its place as I had left it. But—no Lalusini.

'She has gone about some ordinary business,' I thought; 'or has come to welcome me in the path, and we have missed.' But my sinking heart cried aloud that such thoughts told idle tales.

Stepping forth, I beckoned a young man standing near.

'Where is Mgwali?' I inquired.

He replied that he thought my brother must have tarried at the Great Place, for he had seen him there that morning.

'Where is Ncala-cala?' I then asked.

He replied that the old man, who was the responsible head of the kraal under me, had been sent for by the King the day before, and had not yet returned. I asked him no more questions, but entered the hut of one of my other wives.

I found Nxope and Fumana squatted together on the ground. They greeted me in a manner that struck me as showing great if subdued fear.

'Where is Lalusini?' I said.

Then indeed was fear upon their countenances. They looked at each other as though each expected the

'In truth we know not,' screamed Nxope.

I know not how it was, *Nkose*, that in my awful grief and rage that blade did not shear swiftly through the speaker's heart, even as I had promised. I know not how it was, I say, unless it were that something about the woman—some movement, perhaps—reminded me of Lalusini, but my hand seemed arrested in the very act of striking.

'Ha! One more chance,' I said. 'Now, quick. Tell me.'

'We will tell you all, lord,' yelled Fumana, more quick-witted than the other. 'The third night after you left she disappeared. No one saw her go; nor has she ever returned.'

'Seven nights ago that would be; and she has never returned?'

'Never, lord.'

'And that is all we know about it,' whimpered Nxope, still in fear for her life.

But she need not have been. My anger against them was past now, for I could see they had told me all they knew, and that was—nothing. Besides, of them I had no further thought. I sat down on the floor of the hut and thought. The third night after I left. Ha! The vision in Gasitye's cavern! Had I not seen Lalusini's face among the others—among the faces of the dead—for such were all the others? She, too, had passed into the Great Unknown.

Now my thoughts at once flew off to the King. I saw his hand in this matter. Umzilikazi had broken faith with me. He had seized the opportunity of my absence to put my sorceress-wife to death, and that secretly and in the dead of night. Ha! I saw it all now. All that had been said that morning connected him with this. Had he not repeatedly taxed me with not carrying out the conditions of my challenge, so as to justify his own act of treachery? And then his words, uttered in soft, mocking tones: 'Well, well, Untúswa. It is not always possible to carry out conditions in their entirety, is it? Ah, ah! not always possible.' That pointed to some breach on his part of his own conditions. And again: 'I have even harder conditions awaiting thee than the slaying of *tagati* beasts.' It was all as clear now as the noonday sun. Yet why

which white people bear for their women; and, indeed, I think but few, even, of them. Now, as I sat there, realising that never again should I behold my stately and beautiful wife, never again hear the tones of her voice—always soft with love for me—the thoughts that hunted each other through my mind were many and passing strange. In truth, I was bewitched. All that had constituted the joy of living was as nothing now—my rank and influence, my ambitions, the fierce joy of battle, the thunder of the war-march, of rank upon rank of the splendid warriors I commanded—all this was as nothing. And at this moment there crossed my mind the thought of that priest-magician, the white man whom we found offering sacrifice in the forest—of whom I told you in a former story—and who dwelt with us long. I thought of his teaching and his mysteries, and of the God of Peace of whom he taught, and how that, if he were here now, I would gladly put myself through his strange water-rite, and participate in his mysterious sacrifices, so that I might once more be reunited to Lalusini in another world; for such seemed to me to have been his teaching—at least, so as I remembered it. But he, too, was dead; and, though I might sacrifice oxen at his grave, I doubted whether his voice even then would tell me what to do, for I remembered he liked not such sacrifices. Besides, he had always taught that it was not lawful to kill any man, save in defence of our lives or nation; and if there

was one thing as firmly rooted in my mind then, *Nkose*, as the Intaba Zungweni yonder is rooted to the plain, it was that the son of Matyobane should himself travel the road of death. I cared not what fate should be mine therefor; nor, indeed, that my whole kraal—wives, children, relatives, followers—should die the death of the spear or the stake; I myself would slay the King with my own hand. And then it seemed that waves of blood were rolling red around my brain. I saw myself King—I saw all those of Umzilikazi's House led forth to die—I saw the surface of the Pool of Death scarlet with the blood of all who, in the farthest degree, boasted a single drop of the blood of Matyobane, till even the alligators, surfeited, refused to devour any more. *Hau!* I would slay. *Hau!* I would invent new tortures for every man, woman, and child of the

wary; silent and crafty as the leopard when marking down his prey. The strength of the warrior, the craft of the councillor, the coolness and self-control of both—such must be the rule of every moment, waking or sleeping, of life.

'I think I have travelled too fast and too far, and am tired,' I said in an ordinary and even tone; yet, even as it was, so frightened were those two women that they half leapt at the sound of it. 'You two,' pointing at them with my spear, 'attend now. It is not good to talk too much. The tongue that wags too much must be cut out with this'—fingering the edge of the blade—'or the throat is less trouble to cut. Bear that in mind, for I know not how ye escaped with your lives but a short while ago.'

They were quick in their declarations of silence and careful utterance, and I knew I had sufficiently frightened them. And thus I left them.

CHAPTER VIII.

GEGESA'S TALE.

For several days I went about as usual, to the eyes of men showing no difference in my converse and behaviour. At first all would watch me furtively, as though to observe what effect my loss would have on me, if any; but this soon ceased as they saw no difference, and indeed this was not strange, for it is not

hear so much as the 'darkest' of talking among any of the people. But I was awaiting my time, and to allay suspicion I took a new wife. She was young and good-tempered, and was a daughter of Xulawayo, an induna of rank, and a commander of high standing in the army, by reason of which he demanded much cattle in *lobola* for her, all of which I paid him without objection. This astonished him greatly, nor could he sleep for three nights for wishing he had demanded more. But I had an object in view, which was to bind so influential a leader as Xulawayo more closely to me against the time for striking my blow.

Now of this I never lost sight for a moment. Carefully I sounded my own followers, and lost no opportunity of rendering myself popular among the army at large. Yet the game was a terribly risky one, and I felt as a man might who attempts to walk on a ridge of rock no wider than an assegai blade, with the depth of a whole mountain on either side. But the game was worth the risk, for I was playing for a throne and for revenge.

Now and again the King would rally me.

'Taking new wives at last, Untúswa?' he would say. '*Whau!* but you have been long content with old ones. How often have I told you that women are like a bowl of *tywala*: delightful and stimulating when fresh; but, when stale, sour and injurious, and the sooner thrown away the better.'

And I would laugh pleasantly at the royal wit, and send *lobola* for yet another girl, this one, as before, the daughter of an influential fighting induna; but, for all that, the loss of Lalusini was none the less present in my mind, and the desire for my projected vengeance grew, the longer that vengeance was delayed.

Two things, however, I observed, and these did not look well for my plot. One was that never now would Umzilikazi commune with me alone as in the old friendly manner of former days; the other that he never appeared without a strong body-guard in attendance, fully armed, and composed of young warriors chosen from houses whose fidelity to the House of Matyobane was beyond suspicion, they being themselves of that House. But my time was coming, and that I knew, for the very desperation and assurance of

wisest and most carefully thinking man is no better than a fool. And this is how it came about.

One evening I was walking back, along the river bank, to my kraal, alone—thinking, as ever, upon my now fast ripening scheme—when I heard my name called out in a quavering croak. Turning, I beheld the shrivelled figure of an old crone, perched upon a point of rock overhanging a long deep reach. Beside her was a bundle of sticks she had been gathering.

'Give me snuff, Untúswa, O Great Fighter,' she cried, stretching out a bony claw. 'Give me snuff from that pretty box stuck in your ear, for I have none.'

I stepped aside, and, taking the horn tube from the lobe of my ear, poured half its contents into her skinny old hand, and as I did so I recognised in the old witch one who had an evil repute among us for *Umtagati*; indeed, it was reported that she had been 'smelt out' and killed in the time of Tshaka, but had somehow managed to come to life again, and had not been interfered with since because of our custom under which no one can be killed twice.

She was very, very old—so old that beyond a wisp or two of white wool her scalp was entirely bald. Her limbs were mere bits of stick, to which even her few rags of clothing would hardly cling. Looking at her squatting there, I thought she would make an exact mate for old Gasitye, as I had seen him in the *tagati*

cave, squatting in like fashion; and I must have laughed at the thought, for she said, with some show of fire:

'Laugh, Untúswa, laugh. I am old and shrivelled, am I not? But that is a complaint you will never suffer from. Oh, no! Oh, no!'

'What mean you, mother?' I said, pausing as I was about to continue on my way, for there was that in her words which fitted not well in with my thoughts just then. 'I am a fighting man, and such may reasonably not live to grow old.'

'Ah, ah! A fighting man. Thou art more. He who would sit in the seat of the mighty is hardly likely to die of old age,' she answered slowly, poking her head forward with a meaning chuckle.

'Now,' I thought, 'this old witch knows too much. I will just drop her over into the river and make *her* safe.'

may choose to ask. But, beware of fooling me with old women's tales.'

'Ha, ha! And the fate of the Daughter of the Great—is that an old woman's tale?'

'Tell me of that, if you know it, mother,' I said.

'Ah, ah! If I know it. See now, Untúswa, I am old—so old that I am as they of another world. And the other world moves about at night—and I—often I steal out at night and talk with those of another world.'

I murmured assent, and she went on.

'See yon pool, Untúswa?' pointing up the river where the alligators dwelt, to whom were cast those whom the King had doomed to die. 'Often, at night, I go out and sit over that pool that I may talk with the ghosts of them who have died there; and they come creeping up, those ghosts of dead men, all dripping and bloody, as though fresh from the alligators' jaws. Ha! and we have such talks, I, old Gegesa, and those ghosts of dead men—yes, and of women, too, Untúswa—of women, too;' and she paused with a shrill cackle, and leered at me. 'There was thy former *inkosikazi*, Nangeza, she who died there, and she came up and talked with me, saying she should soon have fitting company in the land of ghosts, for it was not healthy to be the *inkosikazi* of Untúswa. And just then I heard steps—the footsteps of men—although it was night, and the neighbourhood of the pool was one of fear and of death. So I hid myself, Untúswa—crept away behind

a stone which the moon threw into a black shadow, and this is what I saw. Four great, fierce looking men came down to the brink of the rock which overhangs the pool, and in their midst was a woman——'

'A woman!' I echoed, staring at her.

'*Eh—é*! a woman—tall and shapely and beautiful, *as a daughter of the Great.*'

'What then?'

I hissed the words rather than uttered them. Again that blood-wave surged around my brain. I knew what was coming—knew the worst.

'What then? This,' went on the hag. 'They led her to the brink of the pool, and were about to throw her in. But she spoke, and her voice was firm and sweet, as the wind's whisper. "Lay not hands on me," she said, "for I come of the greatest the world ever saw."'

'They were chief among the King's slayers.'

'Their names? Did you not know them, Gegesa?'

'Did I not know them? Ah, ah! who is there I do not know?' And she told me the names of all four, and I laid them up in my memory; for I thought how I would have those slayers let down by thongs over the edge of the rock so that the alligators might eat them piece by piece—might crunch off first a foot, then a leg, and so on, as they dangled there. Oh, what vengeance should be mine!

'But how do I know this is true, thou witch?' I said. 'How can I tell it is not all a made-up story?'

'What have I to gain by making it up? Have I not rather to gain by not telling it? Go home, Untúswa, and be happy with your new wives; they are young and bright-eyed, and round, as I was once. *Yau!* Rest content now you know Lalusini can never return. A returning *inkosikazi* is not always welcome; ha, ha!'

I stood gazing at her in silence, and the old hag went on.

'Yet it is better to lose an *inkosikazi*, if by that loss you sit in the seat of a King! Ah, ah! Untúswa; there will be food for the alligators then.'

'Meanwhile they shall have some now. You have lived too long, Gegesa, *and you know too much.* I trust not that croaking old tongue. This is the price I pay for thy news—the price it is worth.'

So saying, I picked her up by her ragged old blanket

where it was knotted round her, and before she had time to utter a cry, tossed her clean over the brink of the rock. I heard the splash in the water beneath, and without troubling to look over, I turned away.

With the blood-wave surging around my brain, I strode quickly onward. Now the mystery of Lalusini's disappearance was a mystery no more. Any last hope I might have clung to that she might one day reappear was shattered. She had died as my first *inkosikazi* had died, a death of horror and of blood. *Whau!* but other blood should flow—should flow in rivers—before many days had gone by. When the King had rid me of Nangeza I had been well pleased, for her pestilent tongue and evil temper had gone far towards rendering life a weariness; but I had lived even longer with Lalusini than with Nangeza, but so far from doing

whose fidelity I could entirely reckon, that man was Jambúla.

Having made sure that none could overhear us, to him now I opened the plot. His face lighted up with joy as he listened.

'To-morrow, by this time, we shall both be ghosts in the shadow world, or I sit in the seat of Umzilikazi, and you among the *izinduna* of this nation. How like you that, Jambúla?'

'If you are dead, my father, I too am dead,' he answered. 'Not too soon, either, is it to strike, for my eyes and ears have not been closed in these days, nor have those of the Great Great One. It is his life or ours. The time when this place shall awaken hemmed in by the spear-points of the slayers is but a question of a few nights more or less.'

I believed this to be true, but even if it were not so it would have made but little difference. The tale told me by old Gegesa had so inflamed my blood that I could wait no longer. Vengeance, now at once—now, before it escaped me. I could wait no more.

A little while longer did Jambúla and I whisper together. Then softly and silently we stole forth into the night.

CHAPTER IX.

'TO SLAY THEE, SON OF MATYOBANE.'

THE great kraal, Kwa'zingwenya, slept. All was dark and still as we drew near it, Jambúla and I. We could make out dimly in the starlight the immense circle of domed huts within their ringed fences, but not so much as the spark of a distant fire showed that any within were awake. Treading cautiously, we took our way round to the upper end of the great circle.

At every gate bodies of armed guards were posted,

Jambúla was to remain outside. If all went well, that is, if he saw or heard nothing the night through, he was to enter himself shortly before dawn, and having stopped up the hole from the inside, was to await my orders. If I failed—and that he would not be long in learning—he was to return at full speed to my kraal, and warn the people there to flee at once for their very lives—to flee both fast and far—for it would not be long before the slayers were on their track.

Were my movements actuated by ambition alone, *Nkose*, then indeed my heart might have begun to fail me. Here was I, in the dead of night, all unbidden, within the sacred precincts of the *isigodhlo*. To be found there was death—were I the highest in the nation—death by impalement, or some other form of lingering torment. But now the thoughts engendered by such knowledge availed not to daunt me. The spirit of Lalusini, agonised and bloody, rose ever before my eyes, beckoning me onward, and my one thought was how soon I might bury my spear in the heart of her slayer.

But for my spear, here before me, was work already. From round one of the huts a man appeared, so suddenly as to collide with me in the darkness, had I not quickly stepped aside. Immediately I struck—and struck home. The broad blade had cleft his heart, and breathing only a soft sigh he sank motionless—being stone dead. I bent over his face, and recognised one of

the *izinceku*, or body-servants of the King. Of these I knew there were two on watch at night. I had yet to reckon with the other.

Now I stood motionless, and held my breath, listening. I was among the huts of the royal women, and there, but twenty paces distant, was that of the King. For arms, I had but a single broad-bladed assegai, the gift of Umzilikazi himself, as I have told you, *Nkose*, in a former tale; not even a shield, for such would but encumber me if it came to a close hand-to-hand struggle. My own craft and quickness were to be as a shield.

Two steps at a time, treading softer than any cat, I gained the outside of the large hut. Peering round I saw what I expected. Right across the door lay the body of a man. It was the other *inceku*.

Pausing again, I listened. All was still inside the hut. I began to cut the thong fastenings of the wicker door. What if Umzilikazi, experienced warrior as he was, awakened by the small amount of noise I had caused, were standing ready for me, waiting in the darkness with assegai uplifted to plunge the broad blade in between my shoulders as I crept in through the low doorway. Then the thought came to me that by reason of his very security, hemmed around with guards, the sleep of the King would be sound and unsuspicious. The fastenings were now cut, and grasping the wicker door firmly, I let it down noiselessly upon the floor of the hut.

There was another screen inside which I had forgotten. Peering around this I saw that the interior was not in darkness. The smouldering embers of a fire glowed in the hollow in the centre of the floor, and by its indistinct light I could make out the King, asleep among a pile of blankets against the thatch wall.

But in a moment he started from his sleep and sat upright.

'Ha! Who is that?' he said. Then, recognising me, he cried furiously, 'Ha, Untúswa! Thou dog, daring to invade my privacy. Are we threatened from without, or why art thou here?'

'*Thou* art threatened from within,' I answered jeeringly. 'I have come to slay thee, son of Matyobane.' And I sprang upon him.

But not so easily was my purpose of vengeance to be fulfilled. Umzilikazi, the warrior and leader of warriors while I was yet a boy, the founder and strong ruler of a new nation, was not so easily to be overcome, although surprised in the midst of sleep. Avoiding the stroke I aimed at him with my assegai, he seized my right wrist and held it in a grasp of iron, and for a moment thus in the half darkness we grappled. Indeed, I know not why he refrained from shouting aloud for assistance, knowing my bodily strength and prowess as a fighter, unless it were that his old warrior instincts moved him to add to the terror of his name by overthrowing so formidable a foe in single strife. And then it was too late, for with my left hand I seized his throat and gripped it until his very eyes protruded, choking back any sound he might then fain have uttered.

wrists relaxed, and he fell heavily to the ground. At the same time a strange, sweet odour filled the air, half stupifying me.

'Slay him, the traitorous dog!' I cried, imitating, as well as I knew how, the voice of the King. 'Slay him where he lies.'

In another moment half a dozen spears would have transfixed the prostrate form, but just then, either by chance or design, one of the armed guard kicked the red embers into a momentary glow. The light fell full upon the face of Umzilikazi.

'*Whau!*' cried the guards, leaping in alarm, their assegais arrested in mid air. 'It is the King!'

Then I saw that my plot had failed. Swift—swift as the lightning flash—I stabbed the warrior nearest the door, and, gliding through the latter, but a very few steps brought me to the thorn fence. No time had I to seek the hole by which I had entered. Gathering my legs under me I leaped. Right over the high stockade I flew like a buck, and once on the further side, I ran—ran as I had never ran in my younger days when I was the King's messenger.

And as I ran, keeping on fast and far throughout the night, I noticed that there was no hubbub in the great kraal behind. This meant that I had certainly failed to kill the King. But what had made him drop thus suddenly? Whatever it was it had been the saving of my own life, for only to the momentary diversion

caused by my imitating Umzilikazi's tone did I owe it that half a dozen blades had not transfixed me then and there. And now I noticed that the same strange, sweet, stupifying odour, though much fainter, was with me as I ran. Instinctively I clutched the *mùti* bag hanging to my neck. *Whau!* It was open. Half of it had been torn away, but from what was left proceeded the odour. Now I saw. Now all stood clear. The bag had contained some stupifying scent. In our struggle it had been torn open, and Umzilikazi's face coming against it he had fallen senseless. He was in my hands. Lalusini's death would have been avenged, and I on the morrow would have proclaimed myself King, and supported my position by force of arms if need be; whereas now I was a fugitive, without home or nation. Umzilikazi still lived, and would pursue me with

save my life—that, too in the direst extremity. For what purpose, then, had my life been saved, but to carry out that scheme of vengeance by some other means?

When the dawn broke, I had already placed a great distance between myself and Kwa'zingwenya, and now the most perilous part of my flight began. The kraals of our own people were scattered about the land, and did any inhabiting these catch so much as a glimpse of me, the pursuers already on my track would not be long in finding me. I dared not lie hidden during the day, for, long as it really was, the distance between myself and Kwa'zingwenya was far too short. Well I knew Umzilikazi would cover the land with searching parties, and that many leaders of these would pay with their lives for failure to discover me. No more deadly crime had been committed since our nation was a nation. I had offered violence to the King's person; had attempted the life of the Great Great One, and only by the merest accident had failed to take it. The offence of the conspirators of Ncwelo's Pool was an easily pardonable one compared with mine.

Carefully I travelled throughout the day. I could see the kraals of our people both near and far, and now and then parties of people themselves, but of the pursuers nothing as yet. Fortunately the ground was broken and bushy, and I was able to avoid observation. For arms I had but one assegai, no blanket to cover me from the night chills, and no food.

You will be wondering, *Nkose*, how it was that so experienced a campaigner as myself should have made no sort of preparation for this flight by storing provisions and necessaries in some place of concealment where I could readily take them up. But the reason lies in the fact that flight had not come into my plan at all. When I had started in upon it my desperate enterprise offered two alternatives—success or death—in the attempt. That a third alternative—flight—might be open to me I had never for a moment contemplated; wherefore, here I was in very evil case.

I managed to pluck some ears of green corn from a garden unperceived,and this sustained me as I devoured it; for in those days we could live for a long time on very little food, and but little rest. By the following

it. And in the clear light that succeeded I could make out a considerable body of armed men.

They were yet a great way off, but were coming towards me, not as though straight from Kwa'zingwenya, but by a roundabout way. A search party, of course. And now I thought gladly how I had been seen by none—though of this I could not make altogether certain. But I would not linger here. Darkness fell and the night was starry and still. Up and up, higher and higher I climbed, intending to place the whole mountain range between me and the Amandebeli nation by sunrise; but I was somewhat weary, and the ascent was rough and very steep. As I drew near the summit the night wind blew chill, singing through the long grass like the wailings of countless ghosts, and strange cries and howlings would float up from the mountain sides. But nothing cared I for ghosts now; my chief thought was to avoid falling over cliffs and into chasms.

But when I had reached the summit of the range, as I thought, the stars grew dim, and, in a moment more, were hidden altogether. A white mist was creeping up from the further side, veiling everything. This was bad, for the most experienced traveller is as a little child in a thick mountain mist; and it was quite as likely as not that by continuing to travel I might turn round unknowingly and thus walk straight back upon the spears of those who came after. No! I must halt

night!

It was time I decided to halt, *N* cold air coming *upward* warned me to of making a step. The swirl and mo lightened the thickness a little. And lo on the very brink of a black chasm.

Its depth I could not estimate, but was not unacquainted with these mount there were clefts which seemed to g very heart of the world. But I saw Away on the one hand rose a great roc along the lip of the chasm, a narrow run.

Now a new thought struck m lead to one of the cave dwellings of who long ages ago had inhabited t If so, no better hiding-place could I diately I started to make my way path

great tongue of slippery rock face against which, and with arms extended, I had to flatten myself; behind, the unknown depths of that awful chasm. It seemed as though ghosts and witches sung in my ears in the dank breaths of the white mist, as though in the fitful puffs of the night wind hands were stretched forth to claw me down. Then, fortunately, the projecting rock tongue ended, and lo! I had gained a flat surface about twice the length of a man. This sloped inward, a narrowing tunnel, with a strange sudden twist just before it ended; and now my heart leaped within me, for no better hiding-place could I have lighted upon. Chilled, and wet, and weary, I crept into the narrowest end of the hole, and hardly had I lain me down than I fell into a deep, sound slumber.

When I awoke, it seemed that dawn had already begun to lighten the world, for I could make out the rock-walls of my sleeping place. Well, I would see, at any rate, what sort of hiding this place promised to afford. I crept to where the cave widened sufficiently to allow me to stand upright, and then, as I turned the corner, amazement was my portion, and a growl escaped me, which boded ill for him who had caused it, for I had run right against the body of a man.

He grappled with me in a moment, seizing my wrist before I could bury my assegai in his body, and speaking quickly and eagerly. We were perilously near

the edge of the chasm, for in my advance I had borne him backward. Then, as suddenly, my grasp of him relaxed, and his of me; for, in the fast lightening dimness of dawn, I recognised the face of my faithful slave, Jambúla, the Xosa.

CHAPTER X.

THE FAITH OF A SLAVE.

'GREETING, my father,' he exclaimed, when we had stared at each other for a moment in silence. '*Au!* but it is well that none of those who come on behind me were in my place now.'

'Who come on behind thee? What meanest thou, fool, leading those who pursue thee to my hiding-place?'

'Nay, father; I came to warn thee, for this place is known to them, and from one point yonder'—and he pointed upward and across the chasm—'it can be seen into. Then they will surround it by day and by night, for none will venture in by so narrow a way as this, and the choice before us will be a leap into yon depth, or death by hunger and thirst, or on the stake of impalement, which is even now reared outside the King's Great Place.'

I looked at Jambúla somewhat suspiciously, for a thought had come into my mind: What if he were meaning to betray me? What if he had been offered

'Let us go hence, my father, and
he said, 'for we must find a safer ref
mist is still upon the mountains, but
may roll back. Here is food that wil
time.'

He picked up a bundle which l
It contained a quantity of grain, sta
as for *amasi*. For arms he had a
three or four casting ones, and a g
knob-stick, which he had brought
when he should find me.

Whatever my suspicions, it wa
remain in that place for ever. Ja
way, we retraced the perilous cliff p
side upon the mountain once more.
sharp look-out, but soon my suspi
lulled, and I was able to appreciat
slave, who had sought me out with t
my peril in the day of my downfall a

It was flat, or gently rolling, and now the dew lay upon it like the sunlight on the points of the waves of the sea. Here and there, like moving dots, we could see herds of game browsing, and the tall necks of giraffes stalking among the flat tops of the mimosas. It was a fair and gladsome sight, *Nkose*, and for us who had to traverse it, promised, at any rate, no scarcity of food.

But just then our eyes lighted upon that which was by no means a gladsome sight—and this was a moving body of armed men. They had evidently come through the mountains by the Place of the Three Rifts, and were now moving along the base in such wise that did we descend from where we were now we should walk right into the midst of them. We could make out nearly a hundred of them. Well for us was it that the mist lifted when it did.

This was not the *impi* I had seen the night before. Jambúla said that numbered half the strength of this. Our chances began to look small. We were between two search parties; and, for all we knew, a third might be sweeping along the summit of the range.

As we lay carefully concealed, watching the movements of this *impi*, we took counsel, Jambúla and I. There would be look-outs posted at some point on the mountains, and anyone moving over the flat, open country beyond could not escape observation. We must wait until night—that was certain.

We watched the *impi* in front of us, and presently saw it halt. It was signalling to someone above and behind it. Ha! Just as we thought. Another search party was coming along the summit.

We could see it now, but it was still a long way off. We were on higher ground, amid rocks and broken boulders. We made out about three score of men.

Our eminence was a small peak rising but a trifling height from the summit of the range. Should they pass without searching this we were safe, for, crouching behind the rocks, none could see us from but a short way off. Should they search, why, then, we must die fighting, for neither of us had any mind to writhe upon the stake of impalement.

We lay behind the rocks and gripped our weapons

kind you white people call 'pheebok,' and beside her a little fawn, skipping and whisking its white tail as it gazed open-eyed at the *impi*. The other men seemed to agree with what their leader had said. They looked towards our hiding-place, then at the bucks, then they passed on their way.

For long we lay, not daring to move, scarcely to breathe. But we saw no more of the searchers, and at last the sun went down, and the grey of evening blotted out the world.

'A vow, Jambúla,' I whispered, as we travelled down the mountain side in the darkness. 'Never again—no, not even if starving, will I slay a buck of that species—male or female, young or old—for it seems that our snakes have taken that form to watch over us.' And Jambúla assented.

Now as we travelled onward Jambúla told me of much that had happened since my flight. Knowing by the uproar within the *isigodhlo* that my plan had failed, he was about to start and warn my kraal according to my orders, when he saw me leap the fence and disappear into the darkness. He, like myself, had not reckoned on the chance of my escape, and his first impulse had been to follow me. But he remembered my orders, and, running at full speed, he warned my people and saw them all take flight before following on my track. Not too soon, either, had they done so, for, looking back as he fled, he had seen from far the smoke

That night we got down the mounta
any trouble, and by dawn were far out
country. Yet not for a moment did
caution. But the land was covered wi
clumps of forest, some large, some smal
ing within these we could travel in con
were able, moreover, to kill game, and t
sparingly, immediately burying what we
lest the cloud of vultures that would g
should mark our locality to those who ca

Now Jambúla, as we began to hunt,
our Zulu casting-spears. The broad-head
ah, that, he said, was good for its own pu
umgcula, or casting-spear, with its stiff, a
terminating in a knob, was a poor sort
killing game at any distance, or with a
aim. So he cut staves and fashioned lon
running to a point, as the Amaxosa ha
hafts, and to these he bound the lighter

well cleared by our people and was kept as a hunting-ground. Not yet, either, had I unfolded to Jambúla the aim of our wanderings.

We had come to a large wide river, and having crossed it, we lay by for a day or two on the further side, intending, if we could, to slay a buffalo and make shields of its hide, for we had come away without our shields. This river-bank was high and broken up into great rifts with earthen sides all filled and covered with trees and creepers. It was a place where a man might lie concealed for ever, and escape discovery even though a thousand were in quest of him, and it suited our purpose well.

It happened that on the second morning after our arrival here, Jambúla had gone forth early to spy out where buffalo might be found; but I, feeling weary, elected to rest throughout the heat of the day. When I awoke the sun was already high, and again I slept. On awaking the second time the sun was on the decline. Rising, I went forth, but of Jambúla there was no sign.

We had chosen for our hiding-place a crack in the ground that branched sideways from one of the great rifts of which I have made mention, and this was roofed in with trees as the roof of a hut. Then I heard that which brought me to an attitude of intense listening. It was the deep murmur of voices, and it seemed to come from the river-bed.

Here the trees and bush grew thick to a cliff of earth about six times the height of a man, over which they hung in a thick tangle. Quickly I gained this point, and peering through, this is what I saw:

Right underneath was a stony space, between the base of the cliff and the flowing of the broad swift current, and this space was full of armed men.

They were our own people. I knew most of them by sight. But one among them was not armed, and at that moment several of them were engaged in binding the wrists of this one, far apart, to the ends of a pole. Then the man was stretched upon his back, two or three of them grasping the centre of the pole, and thus drawing his arms high above his head. His feet had already been treated in like fashion. And in this man, thus made ready for I knew too well what, I recognised

I knew this man well. He was a brave enough fighter, but a sub-chief of small account, and not one of my own following. Could he capture me his fame would be assured. But he had that yet to do.

'Oh, good for thee, Sivuma,' I growled to myself. 'Thou shalt feed the alligators for this when my day comes.'

Seeing that Jambúla was not to be frightened thus, Sivuma signed to the others. Well I knew what should follow. From a small fire which had been kindled among the stones they brought an assegai, whose blade had been heated red-hot. This was placed against the inner part of Jambúla's thigh. I could hear the hiss of the burning flesh, but the brave Xosa never winced.

For long was the hot iron thus held, and when it began to cool another was brought from the fire. The perspiration poured from Jambúla's face, and his teeth were set with agony; but beyond a quiver of the limbs, which he could not control, he quailed not, nor did he speak.

'Well, dog?' at last cried Sivuma furiously. 'Where is thy master?'

'Not from me will that news come, leader of Umzilikazi's hunting dogs,' replied this brave man, speaking in a quick hard voice in his agony.

'Ho! then shall the game continue; and there is

showed nothing of the horrible torment

All of this, *Nkose*, I was obliged to
helpless. Had there been but few me
been in their midst; but what can one
a hundred? I could have yielded, but
have saved Jambúla; for, in any case, d
was the doom of the man—slave or
linked his lot with that of the attempte
King. But I promised myself a rich
concerned in this matter when my day
nor would my yielding up of myself nc
hasten this, that I could see. Besides, a
have endured myself rather than betray
the days before he had broken faith with
the duty of a man to suffer anything rath
his chief.

Now the torture had gone on a little
saw Jambúla raise his head.

'Cease now, I pray thee, my father!' I

'Thou wilt, dog?' cried Sivuma, in delight. 'And thou shalt. Fail, though, and for days shalt thou lie beneath the red-hot pang of the heated steel; ay, until thou diest.'

'I will not fail, my father,' groaned Jambúla, as though weak and exhausted with the pain. 'He is somewhat far from here; but you shall take him. Then will the King, the Great Great One, give me my life?'

'Thy life? That I know not, but it may be,' replied Sivuma, ready to promise anything in his eagerness.

I have said that Jambúla's hands and feet were stretched far apart, being bound to poles. His feet were now cut loose, but his feet only.

'The forest growth is thick where we have to go,' he said, 'and how shall I pass through it bound thus?'

Sivuma looked at him a moment as though pondering. Then he gave orders, and they cut his hands loose.

But hardly had they done so when I saw through his plan. With the hand that was last loosened he grasped the end of the pole, and, whirling it around, swept two men to the earth, finishing off by swinging it with a hollow thud hard against the side of Sivuma's head, bringing the leader to his knees.

So rapid had been Jambúla's movements, so unexpected withal, that before the warriors had quite understood what had happened, he had hewn his way

of the shower hurled at him transfixed his
he struck the water, and was immediately
by the current, I knew that the frame whi
swept down was that of a dead man.

This, then, *Nkose*, was the end of Jamk
and faithful follower, and his end was a nc
worthy of the bravest warrior who ever
endured much horrible torture, and of hin
into the embrace of death rather than beti
and further, striking down in that death tw
those who guarded him armed; and if th
braver or more valiant form of death for a
this, why, *Nkose*, I, who am now very old,
heard of it.

CHAPTER XI.

THE RUMBLE OF THE ELEPHANT.

I WAS now left alone, and having lain hidden a few days—for that *impi*, though it made good search all around my hiding-place, failed to find me—I began to travel southward again. And as I travelled I thought how once before I had fled from our people nationless and an outcast, all for the sake of a woman, as I told you in that former tale when I won the King's Assegai; and now a second time I thus fled—a second time a woman had been the cause of my undoing; and yet it might be otherwise, for I was not an old man then, and who may tell what time holds in store?

And now, *Nkose*, I must leap over a great deal that happened during my flight, for if I were to dwell upon everything, and all I went through, and the peoples I fell in among—how some entertained me friendly and well, and how from others—being but one man and alone—I had to fly as fast and as far as from Umzilikazi's hunting dogs; how too, from others again, who,

seeming friendly, yet plotted against me the direst treachery, from which I escaped as by a flash of time—all this, I say, were I to dwell upon, I should never get to my story, which being bound up with the fate of mighty nations and peoples, is the tale, *Nkose*, which you would desire to hear rather than the escapes and wanderings of one man.

Two moons had reached their full, and had died again, and by then it seemed to me that once more I was coming among my own people, for I heard our tongue spoken in all its fulness; and the kraals were even as our kraals, with the ringed fence and domed huts, and the women at work in the corn lands wore their hair gathered up in the *impiti*, or reddened cone, even as our women wear it. Now I judged it time to enter in among them; and one day, feeling hungry, I stopped at a small kraal—one of several—and gave greeting. None but women were there at the time, but presently from the other kraals men came hurrying, all armed. These were young and unringed, and seeing before them a *kehla*, and a man of my warrior aspect, their bearing, which had seemed somewhat hostile, became respectful, and they gave me greeting deferentially; and presently the women brought me *tywala* and ears of green corn roasted, for they might not open the milk-sacks, the heads of the houses being absent.

Now, desiring information, I found a way of asking

as to the head of this group of kraals, whereat I saw surprise and some suspicion in their faces as they exchanged glances, for taking me for an induna of high import, they could little understand my ignorance on that point. They answered that it was the country of Nomapela, who was absent on an expedition into the territory of the Amaswazi, wherein he was acting as the chastising right arm of the King; but that, from day to day, they had been expecting his return.

'Then I will await the return of Nomapela, my children,' I answered.

'We hear you, father,' they said. And then I was shown to a hut and provided with entertainment, yet I knew that these young men were all suspicious of me, for I myself had come from the direction of the Swazi country, and might well be one of that people.

But not long had I to wait, for presently runners came in, and soon afterwards, great dust clouds, arising from the valley in the hills through which I myself had come, announced the arrival of the *impi*. But before it, streaming out through the defile, like a torrent when the rain is falling among the hills, came a great herd of cattle. *Whau*! it was a goodly sight to see the beasts as they poured onwards, the crashing of horns, as great bulls would now and then turn to fight each other as they ran; the lowing of cows, with calves racing at their sides, the gleam of the sun on the black and red

white and spotted hides, the forest of horns and the
g eyes, and the trampling, and the dust-clouds, and
ark, leaping figures of the young men who, with
s, and flourishing their shields, kept the herd
straying too far on either side. And then the
a full regiment strong, marching behind, the
r of spear-points and the flash of shields as they
ced in column, singing a song of war—*Whau!*
was a goodly sight, and my eyes kindled as, with
thrown back, I watched it, feeling as though I were
d among my own people once more, instead of
g the children of Dingane, that mighty Elephant
tread shaketh the earth at his great kraal Nkun-
hlovu.* And from that great place I knew I could
ow be many days distant.

s I watched, the *impi* halted, squatting on the
a little distance off. Several men detached them-
from it and came to the kraal, foremost among
being Nomapela, the chief. He gave me greeting,

the face of the man who practically commanded the whole of Umzilikazi's army was likely to bear that stamp. So they knew not what to think, and could not ask direct.

'Do you fare our way, brother?' said Nomapela presently, while we ate together.

'I seek speech with the King,' I answered, 'and would fain travel in your company, ye who return conquerors.'

These half-dozen men were all ringed and chiefs. Nomapela I knew by name as an induna of Dingane, and now I thought more than one of the others were known to me by sight. One indeed seemed to think the same as regards myself, for him had I seen eyeing me from time to time, as though he were trying to recollect me. Then, as he turned, displaying a certain scar upon his shoulder, I remembered him well—remembered the scar, too. It was a broad scar, as though the point of his shoulder had been sliced nearly off, and that then the weapon, turning, had buried itself in a deep straight cut. Indeed, I ought to remember it, for it was I who had inflicted it, and that with the very spear I held in my hand.

Often during our march did I find this chief looking thus at me. At last he said quietly:

'The way from the North is far, brother, is it not?'

I assented, and he went on:

'Is the Black Bull of the North growing old and weak that he sends to *konza* to the Elephant who trumpets at Nkunkundhlovu?'

'No older and no weaker than the day his horns gored back the Elephant, yonder at Inkume,' I answered, betrayed for the moment into speaking up for my nation. 'And I think on that day thou, too, didst feel the goring of those horns, Mfulwana,' I added with a half-laugh as I glanced meaningly at the scar upon his shoulder.

'*Whau*! That was a great fight, induna of the Black Bull,' he answered; and then, we being somewhat apart from the rest, we fought the battle of the Three Rifts over again—in words this time—I and this warrior, whom I had wounded there, and I found that my

the stream. Much whispering, too, did I perceive as regarded myself, for I was the only one of that *impi* not in war-gear, and the plainness of my attire and my head-ring unadorned with plumes drew every eye to me, all at first deeming me a captive, until they saw that I carried arms, and then they knew not what to make of it.

And now, *Nkose*, as we came in sight of Nkunkundhlovu, I gazed upon this great place with more than curious eyes. I had seen, when a boy, Tshaka's great kraal, Dukuza, but this one was even more magnificent. As we looked upon it from the opposite heights, I noticed that the *isigodhlo* alone occupied fully a quarter of the space within the ring fences, and before this was the King's cattle kraal. Then the immense number of huts, many rows deep, between the ring fences, *hau*! it seemed to me that at least twenty thousand warriors might easily have been housed there. And the great space in the centre, *hau*! so great was it that I thought our own great kraal, Kwa'zingwenya, would find room to stand within that huge circle alone, could it be placed there. But one thing was curious, and that was a stockade of upright logs, which encircled the outside fence, leaving a broad space between, through which an *impi* might march in columns.

We arrived at about mid-day, and as we filed in

through the lower gate our *impi* began to sing a triumph-song in honour of the King :

'Ruler of the World, thy people turn to thee!
Father of nations, thy children creep beneath thy shadow!
Pursuer of the disobedient, thy scourges return to thee red;
Red with the blood of those who have fallen beneath thy glance.
Thy glance withers, O Stabber of the Sun; O Divider of the Stars
Before it nations are consumed and creep away to die!'

Thus sang they in praise of Dingane, and two regiments within the centre space, drawn up under arms, took up the song, strophe by strophe, clashing together their war shields as they sang.

Now, as we entered, the King himself came forth from the *isigodhlo*, preceded by the *izimbonga*, running and roaring, and trumpeting and hissing, as they shouted aloud the royal titles—and so long, indeed, were these, and so many, that I thought they would

race of Zulu—the parent stock, the ruler and eater-up of all nations, feared even by the white people, of whom just then we were more than beginning to hear—all this told upon me, and great as our new nation was, it was only great by reason of distance and strategy when compared with this. And now, *Nkose*, you will understand with what curiosity I gazed upon him to whom all nations did *konza*—the mighty Dingane, slayer of Tshaka the Terrible, and who now sat in that Great One's seat.

He was a very tall man, in the full strength of middle age, but that largeness of limb which peculiarly distinguishes the House of Senzangakona imparted to him a stoutness of aspect which made his height appear less than it really was. And his look was right kingly. Straight he walked, with his head thrown back—lord, indeed, of the 'People of the Heavens'*—and his eyes burned like stars, as, without bending his head, his glance swept down over the array of warriors there assembled.

He took his seat upon a wooden chair covered with a leopard-skin robe, which was set at the upper end of the great space, the chief indunas squatting on the ground on either side. The shield-bearer stood behind the royal chair, holding aloft the great white shield of state, an office I had many a time fulfilled in times past for Umzilikazi. Then he beckoned Nomapela and the other leaders of the returning *impi*, to draw near and

* The literal meaning of 'Amazulu.'

make their report. They crept up, uttering the phrases of *sibonga*, and set forth what had been done. They had gone through that section of the Swazi people who had defied the King and made raids upon tribes who did *konza* to the Great Great One, and had carried the torch and the assegai upon their path. None had escaped, save, perhaps, a few who had fled to the mountains, having got warning of the approach of the slayers.

'That they should not have been allowed to do,' said Dingane. 'Yet in pouring *tywala* from one bowl to another, a few drops will now and then perforce be spilled. And what spoil have ye brought?'

'Much cattle and good, Ruler of the World,' answered Nomapela. 'Some we left, for it looked weak and sickly, and we knew it was not the will of the

inspect some other time. But—hold. Whom have ye there?' he broke off, as his glance now fell upon me, where I sat among the warriors, conspicuous by the lack of plumes and war adornments. 'Is it the chief dog of this tribe of dogs ye have exterminated? Yet no, for he is armed.'

'He is a stranger, O Elephant, who seeks audience of the Ruler of the World,' answered Nomapela.

'He is from the North, Serpent of Wisdom. *Au!* and a great tale should he have to tell,' struck in Mfulwana.

'Ha! From the North? He has the look of one who could wield yon broad spear he holds,' said Dingane, with that piercing glance of his full upon me. Then louder, 'Come hither, stranger.'

I understood the ways of kings, *Nkose*, none better; and so, disarming, I crept forward, the words of *bonga* rolling out thick and fast the while. Arriving before the Great Great One, I prostrated myself, and then, seating myself upon the ground, waited for him to speak. Still he kept silence, and seemed to be looking me through and through; and, *Nkose*, I, who knew little of fear, felt it was no light thing to be there thus, awaiting the word of this mighty one, at whose frown tribes and peoples fell dead.

'*Whau!* but I think thou dost understand somewhat of the ways of war?' he said, at last.

Black Elephant, I answered

As I said these words, a great exc
forth from the warriors; from all wit
is, for the place was large, and my
reach everybody. The *izinduna* se
King bent eagerly forward to look a
Dingane himself could not avoid somet
Nomapela too, and Mfulwana, started
not even to the latter had I revealed m
knew that I was a war chief of high
wounded him in battle, but even he h
who I really was.

Now Dingane looked at me all the
and I, who knew not what was in his
that it was all even whether death nov
my way at last, or not. For I had woun
in the side at the battle of the Three
had seen the blood flow. I had shed th
royal House of Senzangakona, and were
Dingane. *au!* the place of

wave of the hand which took in those around. 'And now, what is the message wherewith thou art charged?'

'With no message am I charged, Father of the World,' I answered. 'I desire to *konza* to the Lion of Zulu. That is why I am come hither.'

'Ah—ah, Untúswa,' said the King softly, putting his head on one side. 'And what hast thou done, away in the North where a new lion roars alone—that so mighty a warrior, so brave a leader of men, should seek another king?'

'I have a reason, Serpent of Wisdom, but it is not for the ears of all,' I said. 'One thing, however. It is to the advantage of the House of Senzangakona that I thus desire to *konza* to the Elephant whose tread shaketh the world.'

'Thou art a brave man, Untúswa,' said the King, 'but I think thou surpassest thyself in coming hither with that tale. However, I will hear it, and that shortly. And now, Nomapela, bring hither thy captives, for I would see them.'

The women, to the number of a score and a half, were marched up before the King, and lay prone on their faces in fear; howbeit some, who were young and pretty, and well rounded, did not fear to look slily through their fingers, calculating their chances of obtaining more or less ascendency within the *isigodhlo*, for

Dingane loved women much, though he would never take unto himself wives, lest there should be strife as to the succession.

'*Whau!* they are an ugly lot,' I heard him mutter. 'Nevertheless, she will do—and she—and she—and she,' pointing at four of them with his short-handled assegai. 'For the rest, I want them not. You, Nomapela and Mfulwana, and all who have led the *impi*, can choose two or three apiece, and if any remain let Untúswa here take them; for it is not meet that a warrior of his standing should come among us and have no wives.'

We all shouted aloud in praise of the King's generosity, and just then two of the women whom Dingane had chosen faltered forth that they had small children with them.

myself occupying a fine hut within the great kraal of Nkunkundhlovu, the owner of three captive Swazi girls who had been given me as wives by Dingane, the Great King, and this, at any rate, was better than the stake of impalement at Kwa'zingwenya.

CHAPTER XII.

A DEVOURING SWARM.

I HAD no reason, so far, to complain of my treatment at the hands of the King, for I was supplied abundantly with all I required, either by the orders of Dingane, or by the generosity of the *izinduna* and warriors of note within Nkunkundhlovu, many of whom would drop into my hut at all times to have a talk with me; or we would sit in the shade in or about the Great Place, watching the reviewing of young regiments put

Among those who would fain have got much out of me was Umhlela, one of Dingane's principal indunas—a little soft-voiced man, who would sit among the others and put in a word here and a word there, but always such a word as required careful pondering before I could give an answer to it. However, I had not myself sat at the right hand of a king all my life for nothing.

Not until I had been three days at Nkunkundhlovu did the King send for me. As I took my way to the great hut, through the *isigodhlo*, I noticed that the latter was formed in such wise that, once inside, a man might have difficulty in finding his way out of it, or indeed further into it, which spoke much for the suspiciousness of Dingane's character, of all of which I took careful note; for, *Nkose*, it is by reading such small things that a man may look into the minds of other men, be they kings or not, even as you white people draw knowledge from books.

Dingane was seated in the great hut, and with him three *izinduna*—Umhlela, the one who had already sought to draw out of me a great deal more than I had intended he should know; Nomapela, him with whom I had come hither; and Tambusa, a large fierce-looking man, who hitherto had shown me no active friendship. I did homage to the King; and then, in obedience to his command, sat and prepared to tell my tale. But as I did so I could see that Dingane was in a sullen and angry

mood. Perhaps his sleep had been bad, or he had heard ill tidings; and, *Nkose*, whereas *we* must laugh when we would rather weep, must look pleased when our hearts are bursting with anger and hate, a king is different, in that he need conceal what he feels to please no man.

Now my tale pleased not Dingane much, yet I told it not in its entirety, nor did I say aught as to my attempt on the life of Umzilikazi.

'So, Untúswa,' he said, 'when the doings of one king do not please thee thou wouldst *konza* to another?'

'That is not quite it, Great Great One,' I ventured. 'I am a fighting man, a man of deeds rather than of words. I was but a boy when I fled with Umzilikazi, and ever since then has my spear been raised

but little loss. The other way is not to do so, O Father of the Wise!'

'There is yet another way, Untúswa, Father of the Fools,' said the King, softly sneering, 'and that is the Hill of Slaughter for thee, rebel and traitor to two kings.'

'My life is in the hand of the Lion of Zulu, for I myself have placed it there,' I said. 'Now, father, should I have placed it there had I not known it was of more value to this nation than to me?'

'Bold words,' said Dingane, still frowning.

'Bold deeds are more to my taste, Great Great One, I said. 'The fate of the new nation in the North is in my hand. But if I die, it will never lie beneath the paw of the Lion of Zulu.'

The *izinduna* were staring in amazement at the boldness of my words; but the frown had left the brows of Dingane. Looking straight at me, he said softly:

'And what is to be thy reward for delivering this nation into my hand, Untúswa?'

'Only this, Black Elephant, that the whole House of Matyobane be delivered into *my* hand,' I answered.

'Then it is only revenge thou seekest?'

'Only revenge, Ruler of the World.'

Gazing keenly at him, I could see now that I had won over Dingane. I knew that the existence of our new nation had ever been to the parent race as a sharp

stone in the side of a man who sleepeth. I knew that the fear of the Zulu power was ever present to the mind of Umzilikazi, and that one day that power would, sooner or later, reach him. I knew, moreover, all the weak points of our nation and army; and, knowing this, doubted not my ability to surprise and crush it, given sufficient force, and that with ease. Now my revenge looked very near indeed.

But if I had won over Dingane, there was one power I had yet to deal with, and that was the induna Tambusa. In this man I foresaw a formidable opponent, and his word carried weight in the ears of Dingane, even as did mine in times past in the ears of Umzilikazi. Now Tambusa spoke:

'Revenge is a great motive for a man to give up all his cattle and wives in order to obtain it.'

'My life is in the hand of the Great Great One,' I answered.

'Ha! Thou hast well said,' replied the King. And then he dismissed me.

For many days then I dwelt at Nkunkundhlovu; I, who had now become a wanderer; I, who had been a man of large possessions, the chief of many kraals, and the owner of vast herds of cattle, was now as poor as the poorest, living only on the King's bounty. But from time to time Dingane would send for me, and we would talk long and earnestly over our plans for conquering Umzilikazi. At last I saw my revenge within my grasp. All was in preparation. No more *impis* were sent out on errands of plunder or punishment, and the regiments which dwelt at the great military kraal of Imbele-bele were ordered up to Nkunkundhlovu. They came, making a splendid show as they paraded before the King, in full war-array.

When this was at an end and I was walking back to my hut, I heard myself hailed by a deep voice. Turning, I beheld a fighting chief arrayed in the war dress of the Imbele-bele regiment.

'It seems to me that this is not our first meeting, Wanderer from the North,' said this man.

'Ha! I should know thee,' I replied, 'for we have exchanged hard blows in a great battle, Silwane. More than that, thou didst once cry me the "*Bayéte*," and

didst take orders from me as to the disposal of the invading host of Zulu.'

At those words Silwane stared as though he were face to face with a madman. But I brought him to my hut, and there alone, over a bowl of good *tywala*, I told him of those things which had happened during the blackening of the moon which preceded that great battle which was the saving of a nation's life, and of which I have told you, *Nkose*, in another tale. When I had done, Silwane stared harder than ever, thinking perhaps I was the most wonderful strategist he had ever heard tell of, or the most wonderful liar.

'And now, having saved thy nation, thou art to be the means of destroying it, Untúswa?' he said. 'Well, if thou art as good at fighting for us as thou wert against us it will go hard for Umzilikazi's army. Well

saw her thus more plainly than ever, and it seemed I could touch her, and then her face changed, and grew quick and watchful, as though in warning, and it seemed as though the weight of some great peril lay upon me.

Now as I woke, in something very like fear, I found that one of my Swazi wives, who slept at my side, had sprung up and was shaking with fear. She declared that the form of a woman had passed through the hut; that it was a spirit, for assuredly no living woman possessed such beauty of form or face.

I knew not what to make of this; yet, while affecting to scorn her tale, I questioned the girl closely. If she, like myself, had but dreamed, why then it was passing strange that our dream should have shown us both the same vision. In truth, I knew not what to think. Powerful beyond all others I knew Lalusini's magic to be; was it then sufficiently powerful to bring her back from the dead? I thought much of this during the days that followed.

But the days that followed brought that which turned all our thoughts in an entirely new direction, for tidings came which were weighty indeed. The Amabuna * were advancing into the land of Zulu.

They were swarming in, men said. The slopes of Kwahlamba were covered with flocks and herds—their waggon teams were winding through the mountain

* Boers.

passes, seen like vast serpents in the distance, far as the eye could see. In the face of this new enemy Umzilikazi was forgotten. No expedition to the North could be undertaken now. Day by day men brought tidings. The numbers of the Amabuna were countless, they said, and with them, besides their flocks and herds, they had their women and children in their waggons. They had come to remain in this land.

Well was it, now, that the army had been called up, and was disposed in or around the Great Place; well indeed for us now, for we would need all our strength to beat back or stamp out this locust swarm. Bitter and stubborn fighters were they, and knew how to use their long guns. The war-song was sung, and war-dances were held among our regiments, and the talk of all men was of war.

any of us in those days. This man, seeing from his house the death of those evil-doers, came quickly down to Nkunkundhlovu, hoping he might save the lives of others, for he was a man with a kind heart and hated to behold suffering.

Now as he came before the King he was very pale, for he had passed close to the place of slaughter where lay those just slain, with broken skulls; and the sight of the agony of the two upon the stakes turned him very sick.

'You are somewhat late, my father,' said Dingane, when the *Umfundisi* would have pleaded for their lives. 'The mouths of those who kept them closed too long are now closed for ever. Yonder they lie.'

'But those under torture, King?' urged the white man, hardly able to look in the direction of the stakes, so filled was he with loathing and disgust. 'At least give the word that they be put out of their pain.'

'*Au!* Here is a marvel!' said Dingane laughing; 'the white *Umfundisi* actually pleading for the death of men!'

'Yes, but it is to save them hours of cruel torment,' answered the white man quickly.

'Ah, ah!' laughed the King. 'And yet, my father, you teach that nothing but torment awaits bad men after death—torment for ever and ever. Is it not so?'

Now we who listened awaited the *Umfundisi's* reply with some curiosity.

'That is so, King, for it is in the word of God,' he said.

'Why, then, if that is so, *Umfundisi*, it will make no difference whether I order these to be slain at once or not, since, they being bad men, torment awaits them after death,' answered Dingane.

'But were they bad men, King? What was their crime?'

'Their crime was that of those who sleep when they should have been awake, *Umfundisi*; and I seem to remember that in the stories you teach to my people out of your sacred book such are thrown by the God whom you serve into a place of darkness and of never-ending torment. So the punishment I

the torment that these undergo now shall be a bed of flowers beside such as thine, for thy part shall be in the lake that burneth with fire for ever and ever and ever.'

The eyes of the *Umfundisi* seemed to blaze, his hair to bristle, as he thundered out his words, shaking his finger at the King; and we—*au!*—we looked to see a third stake erected to receive the body of this white man, who dared to revile the majesty of the Lion of Zulu—or, at least, that he be led forth to die beneath the knobsticks of the slayers—and we gazed at the King, awaiting the word. But Dingane only laughed.

'Thou mad *Umfundisi*,' he said. 'Had I but spoken of thy God as thy speech is to me I should have gone into torment for ever and ever according to thee and thy teachings. But I am more merciful than thy God, and thou canst go home. Yet hearken! I am god over the people of Zulu, and if a man disobeys me I order his death—*whau!*—a swift and easy and painless death, or at worst a few hours of torment. But thy God? *Whau!* for ever and ever and ever does He torment men after death, in a burning flame of fire! So, *Umfundisi*, I am the more merciful of the two; and I think the people of Zulu prefer the god they know to the one whom thou and such as thee would teach them to worship. Now, go home. *Hamba gahle, Umfundisi! Hamba gahle!*'

'*Hamba gahle, Umfundisi!*' we all cried, deriding the white man as he went away. But some of us wondered that the King should allow him to live, or, at any rate, to remain in the country; and, indeed, had he been a man of any other nation I think he would have died that day; but, being a man of your country, *Nkose*, he was allowed to live unmolested, for Dingane had no wish to quarrel with the English. But most of us—especially Tambusa—would gladly have seen this interfering *Umfundisi* despatched to——well, to that place of torment whither he had predicted the King should come.

CHAPTER XIII.

THE TONGUE OF THE SNAKE.

THE cloud which had rolled down upon the land of Zulu from the slopes of Kwahlamba was destined to be no mere summer cloud, *Nkose*, but was charged with thunders, black and threatening. The army, which had been doctored and made ready for war, wearied the King with its clamour to be sent forth against the invaders, and long and oft would Dingane hold council with the *izinduna* as to what was best to be done to repel this peril. Now I reckoned it a sign of the honour in which I was held that at such conferences I was ever commanded to be present.

But counsels were various. Some were for falling upon the Amabuna in the passes of Kwahlamba; others for allowing them all to cross in peace, and when encamped on our side to throw the whole strength of our army upon them, and, having cut off their retreat, to put every one of them—man, woman and child—to the assegai—even the suckling babe.

'I have a mind to send to the white people at Tegwini,' * said the King. 'They are my friends, but not of this new race. It may be that they will aid me to get rid of these Amabuna.'

But Tambusa, who hated all whites, opposed this idea of the King's. The people at Tegwini, he urged, would stand by these other whites and support them. White was white, and black was black, and all white people stood together against black, although they professed very great friendship when but a mere handful, and had anything to gain by it. He had always objected to this handful of English being allowed to remain at Tegwini from the very first. If it was inexpedient to kill them they should have been sent away right out of the country.

In this counsel Tambusa was right, as subsequent

handle them—and there is but one way.' Then I told that tale of how they would have enslaved our nation, and how they plotted with certain of Umzilikazi's *izinduna* to procure the death of that king; and all who heard me murmured aloud that there was but one way for these people, and that was the way of the spear.

'A swarm of locusts beaten off returns again,' I ended, 'and again and again, until the land is eaten up; but a swarm of locusts stamped flat—*au!* there is no more of that swarm. That is my counsel, Lion of Zulu.'

And again all murmured aloud in approval of my words, for it was intolerable to us that these strangers should swarm down upon the land, not even so much as asking leave of the King; and this, *Nkose*, I felt, as though I had done *konza* to the House of Senzangakona all my life, instead of growing great in the service of another king; for, after all, this was the land of my birth—this people the parent race from which we were all proud to have sprung. Moreover, for the present, I thought no more of my revenge. Here was more than one great and glorious battle awaiting; it was long since I had taken part in such a one, and the blood rushed and danced in my veins at the thought.

From day to day our spies brought in word to the King. The Amabuna continued to advance, and they were in great force. Their leaders and picked men were

stern, determined-looking fighters, fierce of aspect, with their long guns and leather breeches and shaggy beards; and our warriors, listening, lay under arms, their eyes glaring like those of lions, as they awaited the word that should let them loose.

Then came tidings that the Amabuna had formed a great camp some ten days distant from Nkunkundhlovu, and that several of their leaders were advancing to talk with the King.

Soon they arrived. They were but a few men, with their servants. Dingane received them in but quiet state, seated at the head of the great open space of the kraal. Save the King's body-guard, but few warriors were visible, yet so little did we trust the Amabuna that every hut in Nkunkundhlovu held two or three armed men ready to spring forth on a given signal, the while

watched the approach of the white men. 'Soon shall we have its head.'

Dingane was seated in his chair of state, and received the Amabuna pleasantly. Bowls of *tywala* were handed round, and then, sitting in a half circle in front of him, the *indaba* commenced.

They had travelled far, they said, even as the People of God in old times, seeking a land where they might dwell in peace. Such a land they had found, a land over which the Zulu King claimed ownership, but which was little used, if at all, by him or his people. Now this land, which lay between the Tugela and the Umzimvubu, they desired to treat for. For it they would give part payment in cattle and horses, and part payment in acting as friends to the Zulu people, supporting them by force of arms in all their lawful quarrels. So should two peoples flourish and grow great, dwelling in peace side by side, the waters of the Tugela alone dividing them.

'I know not,' answered Dingane, speaking pleasantly. 'When two great bulls stand looking at each other over one fence, are they friends for long?' And we all murmured aloud in praise of the wisdom of the King.

But the Amabuna replied that the land on each side of the proposed boundary was large enough for both.

'The kraal in which stands each of those bulls is large enough for him,' said Dingane, still speaking

pleasantly; 'yet it is not long before one of them is through the fence to drive out the other. Then he rules over both kraals.'

What the King said was very true; yet it would not be so in this case, urged the Amabuna, for there could be no reason why either should seek a quarrel with the other. The people of their race sought a quarrel with no man. They only desired to be let alone.

'Why, then, did ye leave your own land?' asked Dingane. 'Why did ye not stay the other side of Kwahlamba?'

We, who sat around the King, narrowly watching the countenances of the Amabuna, could see that these men did not like that question at all. They did not answer for a moment; then they said, through him who spoke as their tongue, for they knew not ours:

onward, a fierce and unsparing scourge, destroying and enslaving tribes and nations, and seizing their flocks and their herds and their women; and we liked to listen to such tales, for they were those of a right valiant warrior race—indeed, me they reminded of our fierce and destroying flight under Umzilikazi. But now we thought those Amabuna must be fools, indeed; for if they were the children of that people, still less did we desire them as neighbours.

'So ye are the people of God, brothers?' said the King softly, his head on one side.

'That is so, King,' they answered, looking upward solemnly.

'Why then, indeed, should we be as brothers ,for *we* are the People of the Heavens,'* said Dingane. 'Talk we now of the land. As ye say, I have not much use, nor my people, for this land—yet it is a large country. I know not. I must consider it further. Yet stay, there is somewhat ye can do for us as a pledge and an earnest of our future friendship.'

'And that?'

'Yonder in the mountains dwells a dog, the head of a tribe of dogs—not large, but difficult to come at, because of the ruggedness of the country they inhabit. This dog has stolen much cattle and many horses from my people and hidden them away in his mountain retreats. Now I am without warriors,

* Such is the literal meaning of 'Amazulu.'

for the army is away on two expeditions to the northward.'

We who listened thought we saw the countenances of the Amabuna change at this, and inwardly we laughed. If they only knew—ah, if they only knew!

'Wherefore,' went on the King, 'if as an earnest of your friendship ye will go and retake this our property, and restore it to us, then it may be we may grant you the use of the land ye need.'

'And what is the name of the chief of these robbers, King?' asked the Amabuna.

'U' Sikonyela.'

'The cattle shall be restored, King. Do you require Sikonyela to be delivered up to you?'

'No. I am merciful, and will spare him this time. Only warn him that now the Amazulu and the Amabuna

come. Ah, yes! plenty of work would there be for their spears before many moons were dead.

And we *izinduna*, how we laughed among ourselves, for we knew the mind of Dingane. These people must in truth be mad, and worse than mad, to think that the King would give them a vast tract of country in exchange for their friendship and a few cattle—would welcome this swarm of buzzing devouring locusts beating down upon our lands. *Hau!* Mad, indeed, were they. They opened their mouth wide—very wide—and we thought we knew how we would fill it, but not with the country that lay between the Tugela and the Umzimvubu. Oh, no!

There were some among us who would have persuaded Dingane to order the death of the *Umfundisi*, for we feared lest he should warn the Amabuna; but this the King refused to do. The white teacher was not of their race, and he had no quarrel with the English; besides, the very fact of a white man being slain would implant suspicion in the minds of the new arrivals. But the *Umfundisi*, unknown to himself, was closely watched, and meanwhile our plans were fully matured.

CHAPTER XIV.

THE HEAD OF THE SNAKE.

No great time went by before those Amabuna returned, having sent word that they were bringing the cattle and horses taken from Sikonyela. There were about three-score and ten, and with them, their slaves—yellow men—to attend them and their horses.

Dingane had received them in but little state before. Now, however, he received them in a great deal. He

Lo! they come, the friends of the Amazulu;
Full, full, shall their mouths be filled.
The Lion of Zulu is as the sun in the heavens;
In his warmth—in his warmth shall his new brothers grow great.'

This and much more did the warriors sing, *Nkose*, all referring to the hunger for land of these invading whites. They little knew in what manner their mouths were destined to be filled.

'Now we have the head of the snake at last,' growled Tambusa to us in an undertone, during the thunder and din of the singing. 'Soon shall his tail, too, cease its writhings.'

Signing the dance and song to cease, the King ordered the cattle taken from Sikonyela to be brought up. The herd was driven past, outside the fence of the kraal. It was not much of a herd, but Dingane was as full of delight over its recovery as though it represented the wealth of a whole nation. Now, he said, he felt sure of the friendship and good faith of these his new brothers; but we, watching, thought: 'Can these people be such fools as to think we shall give them half our country in exchange for a few miserable beasts like this?'

Then, while talking about the cattle, Dingane asked the Amabuna to show him how they took cattle from other people in war. This they were very ready to do, and the King having sent the herd some little distance away over the plain, the Amabuna sprang upon their

been told off to take part in this mimi
while some kept on firing, others got be
and our men, and, with shouts and
beasts forward. On they came at f
letting the herd rush wildly by, these
ten Amabuna, as they came before th
their horses suddenly and in line, and
in the air in royal salute.

It was well and cleverly done, *Nkc*
was delighted with it, and so, indeed, w
at it as a spectacle. But more than eve
that men who could make war in that
the people to welcome as neighbours
large as our own, and with nothing but
us and them. Oh, no!

For two whole days the Amabuna r
camp outside, and most of the time was
over the question of the large piece of
expected to swallow up. They were w

main camp, where the bulk of their people, with their cattle and women, were left, was peaceful and unsuspicious, and that the men were spread out over the country far and wide, hunting and looking at the land —*our* land—which they hoped should soon be theirs.

On the third night, when all men slept, the King took secret counsel of his principal *izinduna*, and among them was I; for by reason of having met these people in battle, whereas as yet the Amazulu had not, my opinions carried weight.

'Now I think the time has come to stamp out this locust swarm,' said Dingane.

'We have here the head of the snake,' said Tambusa.

'That shall be crushed to-morrow,' said the King.

'But the writhings of its tail will shake the earth, bringing another snake from over the mountains,' put in Umhlela, thinking of the waggon camp and all the Amabuna left there.

'What sayest thou, Untúswa?' said the King, turning to me.

'This, Great Great One. To destroy a locust swarm and to spare the eggs is of no great use. And the "eggs" of this locust swarm are yonder.'

'Ha! Thou art no fool, Untúswa,' said the King, knowing that I meant the women and children of the invaders.

All murmured in deep assent, and I conti

'Let the camp of these plunderers be de
quickly and as silently as possible. Then
bodies of warriors waylay the return of tho
Such, suspecting nothing, will walk into th
shall we be rid of the whole swarm. Thu
occasion, acted he whom I formerly serve
success was thorough.'

'Thou hast the mind of a leader of men
said the King, greatly pleased. 'Thou thys
to-morrow, and see thine own plans carried

I thanked the King, and when we ha
little longer over our plans we left the pi
went to our huts to sleep, our hearts beating
anticipation over the thought of what the
to bring.

Soon after daybreak Dingane sent w
Amabuna, who were our visitors, that th
come to speak decisively about the land,

Accordingly it was not long before the whole company of the Amabuna, with their slaves and attendants, rode up to the gate. But there they were met by some who told them they must leave their horses and guns without the gate. This they liked not at all, objecting that on every other occasion of their visit they had been allowed to enter armed and mounted.

That was true, but on those occasions there were war dances, and the white men themselves had delighted their Amazulu brethren with a mounted display. But this was entirely a peace *indaba*. No warriors were in Nkunkundhlovu, and it was dead against Zulu custom for strangers to come before the King armed on such an occasion. In fact the King would be highly offended, and would almost certainly refuse to receive them at all.

Less and less did the Amabuna like this proposal. They muttered hurriedly among themselves; then it was just as we knew it would be. They dismounted, stacked their guns outside, and giving their horses to their attendants to hold, entered the kraal.

'*Whau!* The head of the snake is now under the shadow of the stone that shall crush it,' quoth fierce Tambusa, as we watched the approach of the unarmed Amabuna.

They saluted the King gravely, and sat down; but many of them looked displeased and troubled, and well

They spoke about the land. They ...
King was to give them his word that morn
hearts of their countrymen would be glad
they should carry back that word.

Now great bowls of *tywala* were brou
the white men drank, the King talked to
rejoiced that that great stretch of country
used by his friends and brothers, the Amabu
were a few useless cowardly tribes still in th
people whom he had spared, but who were th
these he hoped his new friends would pr
annoying him.

While Dingane was thus talking, peopl
coming into the open space by twos and
now there was quite a number of men withi
These bearing no arms, but a stick only.
suspicion in the minds of the Amabuna, not
they formed into two lines, or half circles, a
dance; singing the while the song they h
... on their first arrival

Swaying backward and forward, the two half circles danced, now joining at the lower end, so as to form a wall of bodies between those in the centre and the outer gate, now parting again, and leaving the ends open. And, the while, more and more by degrees swelled the number, and the song rose and fell, not loud, but in long-drawn measured note. The while the King was speaking:

'Fare-ye-well, my brothers,' he said. 'Perchance I shall visit ye in this new land, when ye come to dwell in it. Depart now in peace to your countrymen, and tell them how good are the hearts of the Amazulu towards you, how good the heart of their King. Fare-ye-well! *Hambani-gahle.*' *

Dingane had risen while he was speaking, and now, with these words, he turned to depart. The Amabuna, too, had risen.

'The white man's mouth opens very wide;
It shall be filled—it shall be filled,'

howled the singers; and lo! a mass of warriors swept in between the King and these strangers; we, the *izinduna*, being outside the circle. With alarm now in their faces, the Amabuna turned quickly towards the gate whereby they had entered. But on that side, too, the circle was complete. Then they knew that their time had come. They were walled in by a dense array of stalwart warriors.

* 'Go ye in peace.'

Now began such a struggle as never could have been seen. Our people had sticks, but were otherwise unarmed, for they might not kill within the precincts of the King's kraal. The Amabuna, too, were unarmed, for it was to this end they had been obliged to leave their guns outside the gate. But many of them were large and powerful men, and all fought with the courage of desperate men. They struck out with their fists, and with their feet; they tore out eyes; some were able to draw knives, and with these they slashed and thrust, making the blood fly in spouts. *Whau!* That was a struggle—that was a sight. *Whau!* Hither and thither it swayed—that heaving, striving mass—the shouts and curses of the desperate Amabuna rising hoarse amid the din and scuffle of feet, the gasping and the yells, as those of our warriors who were on the

to die, and there beaten to death with sticks, as the usual manner was.

'*Hau!* The head of the snake is now crushed!' cried Tambusa. '*Hambani-gahle, abatagati*!'*

Then the hissing and the roars of the savage slayers ceased, and the whole mass of our people trooped back from the place of slaughter, howling, in derision, the song they had made for the Amabuna.

'The mouth of the white man is open very wide;
It *has* been filled—it *has* been filled.'

Thus they died, those Amabuna—nor did one of them escape; for even their servants, whom they had left outside to hold their horses, were all seized at the same time, and taken to the place of doom. As Tambusa had declared, the head of the snake was crushed at last.

It is said by you white people, *Nkose*, that Dingane acted a cruel and treacherous part in thus causing the leaders of the Amabuna to be slain. That may be, when seen with a white man's eyes. But seen with ours the thing is different. These Amabuna had come to take a large portion of the Zulu country from the Zulu people, and, had they done so, how long would it have been before they had taken the whole? They made a show of asking the land from the King, but had Dingane refused to listen to them, would they have

* 'Go in peace, doers of dark deeds.'

did, to obtain the answer of the
people? But instead of doing t
Kwahlamba in great numbers, wit
their guns, their waggons and the
and their women, falling upon the l
of devouring locusts. Whether the
not, they had come to stay, and tha
and further, by thus entering the Zu
force without the King's permission
death.

It is true that these people who
the King's guests, but then we ha
which one great chief must not g
another great chief of equal rank.
the Amabuna claimed to be the equ
Senzangakona. He did not appro
subject, but as an equal; and by o
was justified in causing him and

I suppose it will always be so. Dingane and the Zulu people did not choose these invaders to seize their land, so they used what they thought was the quickest and easiest way of preventing them from doing so.

CHAPTER XV.

THE CRUSHING OF THE SNAKE.

As we sat there, we *izinduna*, watching the place of slaughter where those evil-doers had found death, we heard the volume of a mighty war-song approaching. Those within Nkunkundhlovu hushed their own singing and gazed outward. A great *impi* drew near, marching in columns like unto broad black snakes gliding over the ground. Yet, not all black, but spotted; for the white

poured in by the lower gate of Nkunkundhlovu they raised the war song of Dingane:

'Us'eziténi,
Asiyikuza sababona.'

Soon the great open space within was crowded. Rank upon rank the warriors squatted there, crouching behind their shields, their eyes glaring like those of lions as they awaited the word which should let them loose upon their prey. When the roar of the '*Bayéte*,' which greeted the King's appearance, had sunk into silence, Dingane addressed them:

'Lion cubs of Zulu, you are here in your might, for yonder lies prey worthy of your fangs. Yonder is an enemy who has swarmed down upon our land like the deadly locust pest—an enemy who comes with soft words, but never fails to devour that people who is fool enough to believe those words.

'There is not room for two nations in the land of Zulu. Two bulls cannot rule in one kraal. Yonder is another bull who would bellow loudest in the Zulu fold. The horns of that bull are cut off, but there is enough of him left to attract by his roarings other bulls like unto himself. Go now, therefore, and slay that bull. Make an end of him utterly.'

As the King paused, with a wave of the hand in the direction of the distant camp of the Amabuna, the warriors made as though they would have sprung to

The young which appear after them;
So shall it be with this locust swarm
Make an end of it utterly. Let non
children!'

As one man that dense mass of
feet. As from one man the '*Bayéte*
from every throat; and the winnowin
quivering rattle of spear-hafts was
sweeping through a forest. They pou
gates, those terrible ones, broadening
beyond, in a great stream of rushing
leopards, hungry for blood; and w
followed more leisurely, could see in
white *Umfundisi* standing at the
looking upon our movements.

'*Whau!*' growled Tambusa, sco
white man. 'Such as that should
travelled the way of the spear. It
whose croak brings our enemies upo
'Yet that is not ill doing.' I

carrion,' replied Tambusa, and his voice was as the snarling of a beast. '*Whau!* It is all alike. It licks the feet of the King when it thinks to get land from him. When it has got it, the Great Great One should be its dog, even as yonder crow dared to croak not many days since. My heart has been heavy ever since that he was not sent to take the place of those upon the stakes.'

On they sped, those messengers of death, on through the burning glare of mid-day; on through the black gloom of night; on ever, over rugged height, through tangled valley and rushing river, pausing but little to take rest.

After many days we saw signs that we were near the camp of the Amabuna. We rested then, and pushed on cautiously during the night, until within striking distance. Then we paused. Little sleep was ours that night. In silence they lay, that black army of terrible ones, with eyes strained upon the first streak of dawn that should reveal to them their prey.

It came at last, that dawn. No sound from the camp of those whites told that any were awake and watching. They slept as though safe in their own land, as though they had not of their own accord come to place their necks beneath the paw of the Lion of Zulu. Only the crunch of the jaws of cattle, only the occasional sneeze of a goat, broke the silence.

I could not sit still with
blows were falling, and at the he
the *impi* I found myself flying o
in hand. Within, the awakenin
terrible. Wild shrieks arose
appalling war-shout, as women
death upon their pale countena
waggons, and with arms tossed
that mercy we were not there
there, too; but these were few, y
faces confronted me, jets of fla
eyes. My great assegai was sh
the hearts and bodies of these
moment! And through it all,
lines of flying bodies, of tufted
spears come surging over the
side. We had taken the camp.

Not yet, however, was
Grouping together, those Amab

hand, eye to eye, they fought. But the breadth of our broad shields met blow or stab, and the whelming weight of those behind threw upon them such masses of men that they could no longer lift hand, and were borne to earth. Blood streamed forth everywhere, and amid the grim death-yells of the Amabuna and the screams of their women beneath the assegais rose the shrill '*I——ji!*' the fierce triumph hiss of each victorious warrior as he drove his spear home.

And now the whole inside of that great waggon camp was as a den of raging lions let loose. The dead lay in heaps, but any movement seen among such heaps would draw a rush to the place, to stab and stab again. Children of all ages—boys, girls, infants—were dragged from their hiding-places and speared. Even the cattle within the enclosure were ripped and slain. Nothing was spared, young or old, male or female—all were slain; for it was not our custom to spare; and in this matter the King's word had been explicit: 'Make an end of them utterly.' And this we had done.

Now that all were slain we began to see what plunder the camp contained, that it might be collected for the King. And there was much of it—for besides all manner of provisions and stores, there were things of iron and of glass, knives and axes, and all manner of useful things; but, best of all, there were the long

had to leave some of it.

'Make an end of them utterl
word of Dingane, and looking
when we left it, I think, *Nkose*,
we had obeyed the word of the G
full. By hundreds the slain lay
of dead bodies whom the assegai
again. In darker heaps, too, lay
this we thought not much, for eve
alike by all nations who had me
able to stand before the power of
swept away, as all black nations
swallowed up, and the wave of
over them. And as we moved f
new song of triumph thundered f
our host.

There were some who wo
waggons and such stuff as could
this we *izinduna* would not perm

appetite for blood, only whetted with what had already been shed, the warriors could hardly be kept in hand, so eager were they to reach those other camps. But it would have served no good purpose that they should tire themselves by marching at a run. Yet, short of this, our advance was a rapid one.

Even then, however, rapid as it was, we were not to fall upon those other camps, as we had expected, all unprepared. Whether it was that some had escaped from the first camp, or that the noise of the shouting and the firing had reached their ears, we found these Amabuna with their waggons drawn up so as to form a wall, the spaces between the wheels even being filled in with bags and boxes, and as we drew near they were still busy driving in their cattle and horses, for some of their herds had sighted us from afar. Yet even then they were obliged to leave much of their cattle outside.

But to this we gave no heed, for we counted all these as ours already, and such as were scattered about the land we could collect at our leisure. With a roar and a rush our *impi* went at the waggon forts, spreading out in 'horns' so as to enwrap the whole in a wall of living leaping men.

But the long guns from within began to spit forth destruction and death. Pouring into the dense masses of the charging warriors the storm of lead wrought

through body and limb; and in
warriors in the foremost ranks w
effort to hurl themselves upon the
the waggons, so resolute, so cool, a
strike hard when opportunity offere

Sudden as our onslaught had b
so grimly determined was the
Amabuna, fighting for their lives
and women, that they actually beat
attack. Now we, *izinduna*, as th
then become, were taking no active
but from our station on a neig
directing the movement of our pe
runner. But seeing one side of t
confusion we could sit still no long
were like those of a hungry lion, an
assegai—Umzilikazi's gift—had see
my grasp. We sprang to our feet.

'Now, Untúswa!' cried Silwa
fight side by side, even as ever we

encouragement of our voices, the wavering side of the *impi* rallied, and hurled itself—a solid black wave—upon the waggon barricade once more. *Hau!* I seemed to see nothing clearly then. All was red about me. Our warriors, baring their teeth, howled like beasts, making furious leaps in their attempts to reach these determined and terrible enemies; but ever to be met by those fierce, shaggy countenances, smoke-blackened, whence gleamed forth eyes fell with hate and purpose; and the flashes of the guns would singe and blind, so near were they, as they were thrust forward and discharged where the crowd was thickest and most threatening. Even their women fought. We could see them behind, loading the guns as fast as the Amabuna could fire almost. Great broad-faced hags would reach over the waggons and hack at our warriors with axes and choppers, or hurl pans of boiling water over their naked bodies when they approached too near.

More hot, more fierce, their fire hissed through our ranks. The Amabuna had loaded their guns with many bullets at a time, and these, tearing through our serried ranks at close quarters, cut down our men like corn.

Again and again they fell back, only to rush forward once more. But every such onward rush was made with less and less of heart. They could not face those terrific storms of lead, and we, *izinduna*, seeing that

hacked and slit, broken spears, wc
such was our aspect. Many w
where the bullets of the Amabuna h
themselves forward and begged of th
of the spear, which was granted
was complete.

Yet there remained the cattle,
waggon forts we speedily collected
valiant as they were when under tl
wise to leave it and come forth to r
But although it was a very lar
beasts which we swept before u
Nkunkundhlovu, our minds we
Amabuna had held their own agair
alive. Presently they would bring
one we could kill, five would gr
indeed, we were soon to see.

CHAPTER XVI.

OF A NEW WITCH-FINDING.

DINGANE was very angry when we returned to Nkunkundhlovu, and, indeed at first, it looked as though some would pay for our repulse with their lives. But that was no time for sacrificing skilled leaders of men, and winning the resentment of their relatives and following; and this the King knew. So, with gloomy and bitter reproaches, he dismissed us.

The first step taken by the two principal *izinduna*, Tambusa and Umhlela, was to send out and muster every available man throughout the land. All were enrolled, even those whose youth would have precluded them from bearing arms yet awhile, and several new regiments were formed; and while this was going on, a careful watch was kept upon the movements of the Amabuna, for we knew not what they might attempt next. It was intended to attack them again before more could join them, but the idea was abandoned, for careful observation showed that we should stand but small chance of success,

of these invaders, and that then
sent forth a strong *impi* to crush l
I have obtained my revenge. Bu
able foe upon our borders as these
would not have a single regiment
of course, he was wise.

All of which did not help me,
more fighting my heart grew h
thought of Lalusini and how she w
high position among my former na
And, indeed, my position among
becoming daily far from secure, an
on by many who had been most fri
by the King himself. This I attrit
of Tambusa, who had always hat
glad if by any means he could
Afterwards I learned that I wa
jealousy of me, Tambusa never lost
ing the mind of Dingane against m

a very high cliff. More and more did I awaken each morning to wonder if I should see the setting of another sun.

Then something occurred which still further deepened my forebodings. On returning from an expedition which had lasted but a few days, I found that one of my Swazi wives had disappeared. None knew what had happened to her, but I could see by their looks that it were better not to inquire too closely. Well, it mattered not. One girl was as good as another since the loss of Lalusini, and I still had two remaining. But she who had disappeared was that same girl who had been by my side what time I had dreamed; and she, too, had awakened in fear, declaring that a vision had passed through the hut, and I thought that the disappearance of this one, rather than that of the other two, augured ill —how, I knew not.

As the days went by, the gloom that lay upon the mind of the King deepened, and herein the *izanusi*—ever eager for blood, or for gain—saw their opportunity. The wizardry which had wrought ill for our arms must be removed. So there was 'smelling out,' and many were killed; but still the invaders did not melt away in fear, as the witch doctors had promised. On the contrary, they grew stronger; for others crossed Kwahlamba to join them.

Then the *izanusi* declared they had seen other

visions—had received a new and important revelation, to the effect that the workers of *tagati* had not yet been discovered, but should be by an entirely new method. But Dingane was becoming weary of them and their trickeries. He sent for Tola, the chief of the *izanusi*, and roundly told him to use what methods he liked, but if his prophecies fell short of fulfilment this time death should be his reward.

The land seemed shaken by a shudder of ill-ease. The warriors were growing impatient once more to be sent against the Amabuna, but the counsels of Umhlela, that we should wait for our enemies to make the first move—as they surely would—prevailed. So when the word went forth that all were to assemble at Nkunkundhlovu for a great witch-finding, an eagerness of relief went through all; for now we would see what the

never to take the lives of brave men for the sake of gain or malice. All others I knew to be jugglers and impostors, and that Tola and his following were of this order I had long since determined. So there was no eagerness in my mind as on the day appointed I sat near the King, in the midst of the other *izinduna*, while the witch doctors began in their usual way.

The open space within the great kraal was densely packed, save that room was left for the wild dancing and other ceremonies employed by the *izanusi*. These ran up and down, mouthing and bellowing, and shaking the ornaments of their calling—bladders filled with blood, festoons of entrails of sacrificed beasts, bunches of feathers and bird's claws, and snakes and lizards. Now and again they would halt, and pointing with their wands, tipped with giraffe tail, at some one in the crowd, would name him, calling out a string of instances of witch dealing. This one held converse with a black baboon, that one slept all day and only moved out at night, another was reputed to eat snakes, and so forth. All so named were immediately led forth to the place of slaughter; but I noticed that among them was no person of any consequence. The witch doctors, to all appearance, were destroying them out of sheer wanton craving for blood.

Dingane was growing impatient. His brows were wrinkled into a heavy frown. Not for such a well-worn

his thoughts.

Now the witch doctors ceased
and suddenly, from behind them,
girls. There might have been thre
they seemed to have been chosen
and finest of the nation. They
richest beadwork, and wore wrea
upon their heads and twined a
limbs. A strange band, indeed, to
from the midst of those wizard-hou
death.

They advanced, swaying to a me
and softly singing. A deep murm
delight arose from all; for this wa
sight, and all welcomed it as a r
hideousness of the witch doctors.
seemed lifted from the minds of m
were not here to doom to death.

But as their singing rose loud

presence of strangers in the ranks of the lion-cubs, of the presence *of a stranger*. And every time they repeated the words they would sway round so as to face me, as I sat among the *izinduna* at the right hand of the King.

Then, *Nkose*, the nerves within me seemed to tingle. Well knew I the meaning of this. *I* was the object of their denunciations. Any moment now I might step into the Dark Unknown. Doom had found me at last. *I was being 'smelt out.'*

Well, indeed, could I see through it all now. This had been arranged between Tambusa, my enemy, and Tola, the head *izanusi*. The singing band of girls, designed to add novelty to the witch finding, as well as to please Dingane, had for its object my death. The red cloud began to surge around my brain as I sat there. Not in me was it to die tamely; and softly I reached forth for the stick which was the only approach to a weapon which custom allowed upon such an occasion, and calculated how great a spring would enable me to crush in Tambusa's skull ere they could lay hands on me. The death of the stake would be my lot; no matter—I must slay somebody.

The band of singing-girls swayed nearer and nearer; then with a rush of their light feet they came straight for me. Now for the doom. But—not yet. Some unseen force seemed to turn them back again. They

held on around the circle, not having pointed at or named me.

This happened several times, and each time I looked to hear the word of doom, each time I tightened up my muscles for my spring upon Tambusa. Each time, too, the song denunciatory of 'the stranger' grew fiercer, each time only to sink and die away in their throats. Then the *izanusi*, as in encouragement, lifted up their deep hoarse voices, as the voices of beasts growling for blood.

Whau, Nkose! I can see it all still—for at such moments a man may seem to live a thousand lifetimes —the immense kraal, with its ringed fences and vast circles of yellow huts — the assembled multitude blackening the earth in its awed hush—the sea of expectant faces—the countenance of the King sternly

She was standing alone in the open, midway between the cloud of scowling witch doctors and the band of girls, and there was that in her wondrous eyes which constrained and controlled the latter. She, too, was arrayed in rich beadwork, but wore no wreaths or garlands of leaves, and as I gazed upon her standing there—a splendid and majestic form—why then, *Nkose*, anybody who chose might have stepped up and slain me, unresisting in my amazement. For she who stood there was none other than my lost sorceress-wife, Lalusini.

Had the shades sent forth their spirits? Had the grim alligators in Umzilikazi's pool of death shrunk back in fear from so royal a prey? Was I dreaming, or had I gone mad with the prolonged suspense of my impending doom? No! In the very life there she stood—she to avenge whom I would have slain a king—would have destroyed a whole mighty nation. And she stood there to avert from me the sure and dreadful death—the death of the man at whom the witch-wand has been pointed.

One glance she flashed upon me from her wonderful eyes—quick, full, penetrating—one glance and no more; but in that glance I knew I was safe, for who should harm one whom the most marvellous magic ever known now protected?

For some time thus she stood, speaking no word,

only gazing around with calm commanding eyes. Then the King grew impatient.

'Have done,' he exclaimed, with a frown. 'Let us see whether the magic of Mahlula is greater than that of Tola.'

'The magic of Mahlula,' had said Dingane. Then Lalusini was not known. Yet it seemed to me the majesty of the House of Senzangakona was so stamped upon every feature that her very look must betray her.

'Judge now for thyself, Father of the Wise,' she replied. 'This is the word of Mahlula. The "stranger" of whom Tola speaks, of whom his company did but now sing, is not here, else these'—showing with a sweep of the hand the band of girls, who had ceased their movements and were now sitting in a ring around her —'these whom I have trained and taught would have

terrible ones. Still they advance, those whites. Then that cloud whirls down upon them, breaks over them. Ha! There are death-screams as the flash of the spears rises and falls, and horses struggling, hoofs in air, and the song of those black ones is a battle-song of triumph.'

Now I saw that the speaker had fallen into one of those divining trances I knew so well, and in which all she foretold had come to pass. Dingane, too, began to see this, and asked eagerly, yet not without awe in his tone:

'And when shall this be, sister?'

'Hearken to no idle counsels. Heed no false magic,' she answered, with meaning. 'I, and I alone, can see into the future. Be led by me if this nation would live.'

With these words, I, who looked, saw the vision pass away from Lalusini's countenance, and her eyes were as those of one who awakens out of a deep sleep. The King, too, must have seen it, for he forebore to question her further. Then he spoke, low at first, but raising his voice in a black and terrible burst of wrath.

'Now of yon impostors I will make an end. Take them away, ye black ones.' And he pointed with his spear at Tola and his following.

At the word of the King, the slayers sprang forward. But the witch doctors fled howling, and keeping

lower gate, they were seized and drag
shrieking, without the kraal. And as
fell with a heavy thud upon their cu
thirsty brains, a murmur of fierce de
who heard, for the people hated these v
and rejoiced that they themselves shou
they loved to deal out to others.

There was one, however, who did r
that was Tambusa; indeed at first he l
ment to stay the word, which was that
izanusi; but the look on the face o
fell and deadly, that even the boldı
quailed before it.

And I—*Whau!*—I rejoiced th
and that Tola was dead. But Tambus

CHAPTER XVII.

THE DWELLING OF THE WISE ONE.

WITH the slaughter of the witch doctors Dingane had retired, and the vast assemblage of the people, breaking up, was streaming away in different directions. Mahlula had disappeared.

Then, having gained my huts, I gave orders that I was to be left alone, and sat down to take snuff and to think. For here was a wonderful thing. She whom I had thought dead was alive again—had reappeared at the very moment when death would otherwise have overtaken me. There was something of fear in my mind as I thought of it all. Was it really Lalusini whom I had seen, or was it another sorceress who bore to her a most marvellous likeness—a sister, perhaps? But even the House of Senzangakona could not produce two such, I reflected; and then the very method she had adopted of averting from me the doom was the method of Lalusini. And now I longed for her again, for, as I told you, *Nkose*, I loved her as you white men

the real relationship between us
her?

How was it I had never heard
No talk, no word of a marvellous
sorceress like no other ever seen, h
Tola I knew, and those who work
but of this one never a word. Wa
stranger and not yet fully trusted
tale was untrue anyhow, for here w
well, and beautiful as ever. The
get speech with her.

To this end I went out. First
Silwane. But when after bringin
the events of the morning I would
him what he knew as to the s
found that he knew but little, as d
his hut. Her appearance in their
her movements were mystery, her
mystery; and hearing this I thou

them I could obtain no tidings, nor from any with whom I talked on the subject; and as day after day went by, I began to wish I had not beheld Lalusini again, for now it seemed as though I were losing her once more.

Then my mind went back—back over my life since I had first beheld Lalusini and at great peril had managed to keep her for myself; back over our first meetings in the rock chamber of the Mountain of Death, what time we had eaten up the Bakoni, the nation who owned the Blue Cattle, and I remembered her words: 'There is a people into whose midst I will one day return, and there I shall be great indeed, and you through me.' Ha! Was this part of a scheme—of a carefully-matured plan? It seemed like it. So I resolved to wait and let things shape their course.

Now the very day on which I had formed this resolve I chanced to be outside of Nkunkundhlovu alone. Two girls strode by me with bundles on their heads, and as they did so, one whispered, 'This night—induna of the Great One who sits in the north. This night, by the two large reed-beds at the turn of the river. Mahlula waits.'

The speaker passed on, but I, *Nkose*—my blood leaped at the words. At last I would have speech with Lalusini. At last we would meet face to face. Yet, even in the midst of my joy came a misgiving.

Was it a snare—was it a trap Tambusa had set for my undoing? for the man who wanders at night on mysterious business—*au!* he is soon an object of suspicion, and to be an object of suspicion at that time meant death.

This, however, I was ready to risk, but for all that I resolved to proceed warily, and he who should attempt treachery upon me might well wish he never had. So with my great assegai, together with a heavy knob-stick and a small shield, I wandered up the river shortly before sundown, and did not return to Nkunkundhlovu for the night.

It had fallen quite dark, though the stars glittered forth in countless eyes from the blackness above. There was just the faintest murmur of the wind in the reed-beds, like the sigh of one who waits, and

The words seemed to come out of nowhere. Quickly I looked up, but the voice was not that of Lalusini. Then I made out a dark shape—a very shadow.

'Follow now, holder of the White Shield,' it said, and immediately began to move away.

The voice was that of a woman—soft and pleasing. Keeping the shadow in view, yet warily, I moved forward. Beneath the heavy gloom of trees overhanging the river bank we moved, and I had quite lost to view my guide, but at such times her voice would lead me; and at last I found she had halted at the entrance to a great rift like unto that wherein I had hid what time Jambúla was surprised by the *impi* in search of me.

My guide signed me to follow, and lo! we were threading our way in darkness between two great walls of earth. Then a light shone dully forth, and there, in a cave formed by the closing of the earth walls overhead, I beheld a fire.

'Advance now, induna of another King,' said the voice of my guide, 'for my errand is done.'

Even as I looked round for her she had disappeared. But raising my eyes to the lighted space in front I beheld that which made me forget all else, for before me stood Lalusini.

In the circle of firelight there she stood, a smile of welcome wreathing her lips, her splendid form erect and tall as when I last saw it standing to watch me out

once more.'

No words did I utter, *Nk*
and we embraced long and w.
to talk, for we had much to s

'Welcome, Untúswa,' she
hands. 'Welcome, thou gr
have slain a King who knew

'Ha! But how didst thou
ment.

'What do I not know?
smiling at me. 'Listen; I s
in the "great hut" of the *i*
way along the cliffs of the Ink
in the buck with its fawn t
pursuing *impi* by showing nc
upon thy neck saved thee wh
and stupified?'

'*E—hé!* but that is ind
múti which saved me from t

Umzilikazi's slaying dogs came to hale me forth in the black night, I laughed to myself, for I knew I had that by which the alligators should not harm me. I leaped into the dreadful pool where so many have died—and —— came out quietly on the other side what time those dogs returned to report to Umzilikazi that the sorceress he hated would trouble him no more; but perhaps in that they lied—ah, ah, Untúswa, perhaps they lied! Not for nothing did that Great One from whom I sprung cause me to be taught the deepest mysteries of the magic of the wise. And thyself, Untúswa, through many wanderings camest thou here?'

'*Whau!* Not to thee need I tell of my wanderings, Lalusini, thou to whom all things are known,' I said.

'And I think among such things are all thy wanderings,' she laughed. 'Thou camest here to deliver the Amandebeli into the hand of Dingane.'

'That is so, Lalusini; and for thy death the whole House of Matyobane should have died a thousand deaths. And now?'

'And now? We will see what the future may unfold.'

Thus we sat and talked on far into the night, and many a question did I put to Lalusini concerning her own wanderings, and how she had first appeared at

I know not how clear of suspicio
but that it is not entirely clear let tl
has the Great Great One desired th
an inmate of the *isigodhlo*. Now
handsome women is known to the
I—well I am not quite the least
Untúswa.' This she said with a play
fore it may be that he suspects some

Then I told her about Tambusa,
placed me in daily peril. Her face c

'We must suffer him for the pres
said. 'He may be necessary to me i
compass his death would be to jeopa
He and Umhlela are all powerful in tl
must remain so for a little longer. S
cautious, for even the shield of m
always be broad enough to shelter the

The night had fled as we sat tl
indeed, it had fled—and now Lalusi

one, for which reason, indeed, she had chosen this night for our meeting.

Thus we parted, and it was arranged that I should not seek her out again until she sent me word, as before. She wanted for nothing—there were those who supplied her wants, and her dwelling-place was safe and secure. None dared invade it.

As once more I threaded my way along the river-bank in the darkness, I sang softly to myself, not in fear, as many of our people do, to keep away evil ghosts, but in joy. My beautiful sorceress wife! *Au!* Was there ever another such?—and she seemed to have returned to me from the dark deeps of the dead. But with my joy there mingled another thought. The desire for vengeance seemed to have passed—the longing to deliver my former nation over to the spears of Dingane seemed wondrously to have diminished. I remembered old comradeship—and friends, many and brave, who had charged with me in close and serried line, shoulder to shoulder, in the lightning rush of our might as we hurled ourselves on the foe; who had sprung forward with redoubled courage to the rallying wave of my white shield; and now it seemed that I desired no longer the destruction of these. With the recovery of Lalusini, my rancour against Umzilikazi even seemed to melt away. But only to accomplish such destruction had I been allowed to *konza* to Dingane, wherefore now

Amabuna threatening us, we had en
of for some time to come. Umzilil
attended to until afterwards.

While comforting myself with th
thing happened. There was a rustlin
a quick patter of feet. It was the da
night, namely, that which precedes th
eyes, well accustomed to the gloom,
the swift glide of fleeing shapes—ind
snarling yelp arose, as one of the sha
against me as I stood to listen. But
wild creatures of the night—after the
who disperse when suddenly startled

Then there came to my ears a
moaning of a woman in fear, or in pain

CHAPTER XVIII.

THE REFUGEES OF THE NGOME.

At first I liked it not, for strange *tagati* beings are about in the darkness—half-man, half-beast—who rend those that wander alone at night. But even of such I felt no fear then, wherefore I went straight to the spot whence the sound came; and, ready to use my spear if need be, called out to know who it was that spoke.

The answer came almost beneath my feet, and in the darkness I could make out a form lying there. I bent down and touched it. It was the form of a woman.

'Remain by me till dawn,' gasped a voice hoarse with pain and fear. 'Those horrible beasts. They will rend me again. Oh, kill me, for I suffer agonies!'

'Who art thou?' I said, not liking this encounter.

'Nomshasa, the wife of Untúswa,' came the feeble answer.

Whau, Nkose! Then, indeed, did I well-nigh leap for amazement. For the name was that of one of

shrieked.

'Ah—touch me not! I
horrible beasts! Put me ou
the back of the head will do i

Now the first streak of da
the earth, and by it I could s
so indeed. The hyenas whicl
deed begun to devour her, an
torn. But how had she come
Then, by the fast increasing
called me by name.

And I, *Nkose*, gazing a
horror. The whole of her scal
and it seemed as though her
in. Her elbow joints were s
too, were her wrists, and there
burns upon her body. The m
at all. I was full of pity fo
a handsome and pleasing gir

seized by order of Umhlela, and questioned as to my doings, but could tell nothing that would go against me in an accusation of witchcraft. She was kept a close prisoner in a hut until the return of Tambusa, when she had been put to the torture to force her to confess. They had burned her with fire, had broken her joints with heavy knob-sticks, and that not on one day, but on many; but she would say nothing, till at last, losing patience, Tambusa had ordered her to be thrown outside and knobkerried. But the slayers had done their work in bungling fashion, and so she had waited until night and dragged herself away in the darkness to die alone. Then, when faint and too weak to move, the hyenas had fallen upon her.

No, the King could not have known, for it was in order to condemn me before him that they had tortured her, she said. But when I asked why they should have selected her rather than the other two, then, *Nkose*, came in the old, old tale, the mischief that can be wrought by a woman's tongue. That vision which Nomshasa had beheld while asleep at my side she could not keep to herself. She had chattered about it, and this coming to the ears of the two principal indunas who, in their jealous hatred, were watching my every movement, had put it into their minds to use her as a means of substantiating a charge of witchcraft against me, such a charge as Dingane

constancy under the torments th
she had shown no weakness at
strength and bravery of the most
and this I told her.

She was greatly pleased, and
over her face in the midst of her p

'I loved thee, Untúswa,' she
when the King gave me, a capt
have been made a slave, to wi
warrior as thou. And I think th
little to the other two, but thou w
and the torturers might have t
pieces before I would have let fal
thee. And now I think I we
there might in time be others
prefer to me; yet for a little
first.'

All this was said, not as I h
Nkose, but slowly and in gasps

Nomshasa, and have been counted great among my wives.'

'But not greatest——' she said, attempting to smile. 'Yet hearken, Untúswa, and be warned. Return not to Nkunkundhlovu, for death awaits thee there. There is another great bull of the House of Senzangakona who would fain roar in this kraal. Mpande would welcome such a fighter as thee.'

The dawn had now spread, and soon the sun would come forth from behind the rim of the world. And now, in the full daylight, the terrible injuries that poor Nomshasa had received, both from the torturers and the teeth and claws of the beasts, looked so awful that every living moment must be to her a moment of intense agony. She could not live. She must have seen into my thoughts, for she said:

'It is time to give me rest, Untúswa. Yet return not to Dingane. They who were appointed to slay me jeered me beneath their blows, saying that before another sun or two set thy shade should join mine. Wherefore, flee. And now——Strike!'

I looked at her, and my heart was heavy with pity and wrath. Then I said:

'I will strike indeed, Nomshasa, for thy pain is too great. Yet let this lighten it. When the day of my power comes, be assured that the pangs of Tam-

unarmed one as the blow fal

I turned her gently ov
groaned with the agony of it
I held hers. For a mome
eyes were closed, and somet
her face. I raised my righ
quick crushing blow brought
It fell, fair—just where the
back of the neck. Her ago
even ran through her, so c
death overtaken her.

Notwithstanding the w
took my way in the directio
thought I might perhaps g
meet whether the danger th
not; whereas by taking a c
overtake me suddenly and u
upon one who is blind. Y

Silwane. But, to my surprise, when I would have accosted him he turned away, as though not aware of my presence. This looked strange, but while I was pondering as to what it could mean, I heard Silwane begin to sing softly to himself. I listened as the words grew louder and louder, yet not so as they could have been heard from afar. And the words were strange, for he sang of a buffalo-bull for whom hunters lay in wait, whom their circle had well-nigh closed around; that the Ngome mountains were wild and broken, full of great forests and impenetrable hiding-places; and that there, and there only, had the hunted buffalo fled, that there, and there only, might he be safe. So he kept on singing. To any who heard, he might have been muttering an ordinary hunting-song, but to me, listening, ah! I saw his meaning. He had not really failed to observe me, but the last thing he desired was to do so in fact; and now he raised that song in urgent warning. Ah! he was a man, indeed, *Nkose*, was that same Silwane; a valiant fighter when we met in battle in opposite ranks; a true and faithful brother of the spear now that we had fought side by side.

So I saw through his warning and the advice it conveyed, yet before acting upon it I would take counsel with Lalusini. To this end I turned back, and travelling with great caution, at length I gained the strange earth cave where she dwelt.

idea that I should join in th
her head.

'That will not do, Untú
my plans at all. *Au!* It
reversed,' she went on, with
always so. I know this p
and am in a better position tc
be, act. Now the only way
the seat of Dingane is with t
we have no need of these w
counsel, Untúswa. Flee h
beyond the Black Umfolo
There dwell a number of me
and who will welcome thee a

'A wanderer again! '
how is it that these people,
dwell in the heart of the lan

'Because the King does r
They are made up of men wl

relatives of these men, dreading lest the doom should fall upon them also. Now these men are so numerous as almost to constitute a tribe in themselves; they are wild and fierce, but will welcome such another fighter. That is the only plan, Untúswa; thou must flee to the Bapongqolo. Did not even the warning of Silwane convey that? Was it not about a hunted buffalo who found safety in the Ngome forests?'

'That is so, Lalusini,' I answered. 'Yet it seems that I have found thee after all this time of sorrow, only that we must lose sight of each other immediately.' And I looked at her sadly.

'Patience, Untúswa,' she said. 'I am planning to make thee great, that thou and I together may rule the world. Say, are we not of the sort who are born to that end?' And, coming over to me, she placed both hands upon my shoulders, looking up into my face; nor had she to look *up* very much, for, tall as I was, she, for a woman, was of splendid stature.

'I think, indeed, we are well fitted to rule it,' I answered, with pride.

'Then go now, a wanderer once more, Untúswa, but only for a short while. Besides, it may be that I will find thee out, even among the fierce Bapongqolo, from time to time,' she added.

'Why, then, go I forth with joy,' I answered. 'Farewell, Lalusini. Delay not to find me out.'

fugitive from the parent nation, eve
shoot. Verily it seemed as though
rest.

Now the undertaking before me
my experience and familiarity with p
one, for by using ordinary caution I c
unobserved. I avoided the kraals of m
at night. Twice I saw in the distanc
warriors who might or might not ha
of me; but these I easily eluded
thereby; and the third evening af
Lalusini I was well in among the wi
the Ngome forest.

And they were solitudes, *Nkose.*
and spurs of the mountains were co
forest surging up in seas of foli
immense rock walls of the Lebombo m
chasms and deep ravines through whi
streams whimpered, half hidden bene

thundered from cliff to cliff the roar of the lion. Birds chattered and piped, and the buzz of insects hung ever upon the air, but of man and his habitations never a sign.

'Now,' thought I, 'where are these people of whom Lalusini spoke? for these solitudes are not altogether to my mind. I like better not to dwell alone.' But still I wandered through unpeopled forests, seeing no sign of man. I grew uneasy. There was abundance of game, easily slain, too. Still I desired converse.

This, however, came my way at last, and in right startling manner did it come. I had turned the corner of a great rock, where the track I had been following opened into a grassy glade. Suddenly there sprang up right at my feet several men fully armed, who, with a loud shout, called on me to halt.

CHAPTER XIX.

THE VENGEANCE OF THE REFUGEES.

'AN *impi* sent by Dingane,' was my first thought, as I gazed upon the fierce countenances and the spears poised aloft with threatening flash.

'Who art thou—and whence?' said he who appeared to be the leader, a tall man and savage of mien.

'Rather, who are ye?' I answered, with another ques-

To my surprise they did not come on. The leader again spoke.

'Once more, who art thou? He who wanders in the retreat of the Bapongqolo must needs give an account of himself.'

'*E—hé!*' assented the others.

Then I lowered shield and weapons at once.

'I am Untúswa, the son of Ntelani. Perchance ye have heard of him, ye who are refugees.'

By the look which they exchanged I knew they had heard of me. Then the leader said:

'What seek you here, Untúswa, for in truth that is a name which is known?'

'I seek a refuge among the people who are in refuge,' I said.

'Why then, thou art welcome, Untúswa,' he replied. 'I am Sifadu, the son of Kona, and I wielded a sharp spear in the ranks of the Imbele-bele, of which I was a captain. But Tola, that jackal-spawned cheat, did name my father at a witch-finding, and he, being old, died the death of the black ants; but I and the remainder of his house escaped—and here we are.'

'Tola will name no more, Sifadu,' I said. 'The knob-sticks of the King's slayers have put that form of pleasure beyond his reach.'

'He is dead, then! *Hau!* I am glad, and yet not, for one day I had promised myself the delight of

perhaps as well for Tola in th
had died the swift and painless
stick.

Thus we conversed, Sifadu
journeyed I told him and the oth
what had happened; of the invasi
and how we had destroyed many
heard something of this, but I, wh
it, was able to tell them everything
especially wanted to know about
plotting in favour of Mpande.
could not tell them much, becaus
myself.

The principal place of the Bapo
of one large kraal, but a number of
scattered were these, and so carefu
the dense forest which covered th
hollow or bowl, that it would be wel
strike them all at one blow; and t

strewn were the approaches; and, indeed, all such were under the observation of small outpost kraals, which served the purposes of pickets.

I gathered that these refugees were counted by hundreds. They were of all ages, from quite old men down to boys. Most of them, however, were middle-aged men in their prime; but whether the fact of being refugees kept them ever on the alert, all had a quick, ready, and fearless look, together with fine and well-knit frames, that stamped them as a warrior clan of no contemptible strength. And to Sifadu all seemed to look up as to a recognised chief.

Of this Sifadu I knew not quite what to make. He was friendly at first, but as time went by he seemed to look at me with jealous and suspicious eyes, as though he thought that a man of my standing and prowess would hardly be content with the position of one among many, wherein he was right, perhaps. Of one thing, however, I was certain. Did I or any other man desire the chieftainship of these outlaws Sifadu would first have to be dead.

For the present, however, I had no such thoughts. I was content to dwell quietly and unmolested, and await the turn events might take. So, as time went by, I seemed to have become as one of the Bapongqolo. Together we hunted the wild game of the forest—together we made descents in search of plunder into

'Of a truth, Untúswa, the
Dingane himself would be glad
to me, as we were returning fron
'With our help, even we migl
Then should we not be among the
Then would there not be some w
because the son of Kona had ret

Such a thought as this had
but I desired not to foster i
at least, not until I had determin
so to Sifadu I replied lightly on
as of no importance.

Lalusini had kept her word,
that we should meet and hold
But on the second of these o
great. The Amabuna had cross
force, intending to march upon
had been a tremendous battle, b
had defeated them and had driv

than the bank of the Tugela, for the King's warriors made meat of that *impi* until the river ran red with their blood; and, in his wrath and disgust at this breach of faith on the part of the whites at Tegwini, Dingane sent an *impi* there to eat them up, too. *Whau!* and they would have been eaten up but that they took to the water—took refuge on a ship that was there—for these whites, *Nkose*, had no business to interfere in a quarrel which concerned them not. They were not of the blood of the Amabuna, and they had ever been treated as friends by the house of Senzangakona since the great Tshaka had allowed them the use of the lands on which they then dwelt. So they were rightly served.

Now all these tales of war and of great battles fired my blood, for I would fain have been in them; yet here I was, hiding away as a fugitive. But when I would have boldly returned, craving only that Dingane would allow me to wield a spear in the ranks of his troops, Lalusini dissuaded me. The hostility of Tambusa and Umhlela burned as hot against me as ever, and indeed I had fled not any too soon. She bade me wait. She herself was high in favour with the King by reason of the victories which had attended the Zulu arms, for she had foretold them.

Not without risk did I thus meet Lalusini. I could not reveal the real relationship between us, and the suspicions of the fierce Bapongqolo once fairly

those people towards me as we
night. But the second time so
happened that it gave them all
about.

Lalusini had finished telling
when, of a sudden, her manne
suspicious.

'We are being watched, Unt

'Watched? Why then, it wi
—for the watcher.'

And hardly had the words esc
from her side. I hurled myself
of the bush, but something was al
it away from me. I made out th

'Now, stop!' I cried—a casti
throw. 'Stop! or I cleave thee

I was about to hurl the sp
shoulders of the fleeing man—w
paces in front—when he stopped

grasp. For the face was that of a ghost—the dreadful glare of hate and fury that paralysed me was upon the face of a ghost. I was gazing upon one whom I had seen slain, whom my own eyes had beheld clubbed to death by the King's slayers—Tola, the chief of the witch doctors.

We stood for a moment thus, motionless, I gazing upon the horrible form of one I knew to be dead, as it stood there, shadowed in the gloom of the trees. Then, slowly raising an arm, the voice came, deep and hollow—

'Retire—or I put that upon thee which shall blast and wither thy heart and turn to water thy courage; which shall change the most valiant of fighting-men into the most cowardly of women.'

Awful as were the words, the effect upon me was not that intended. He had better have kept silence, for now I knew him to be alive, and I sprang upon him. He had a spear, and struck furiously at me with it; but I turned the blow, and then we closed. He fought and bit and kicked, and, powerful as I was, the lithe and slippery witch doctor for long defied my efforts to secure him, for I was anxious to take him alive. At last it seemed I should be obliged to kill him, when something was dropped over his head which, the next moment, was rolled round and round in a thick covering of stuff. It was Lalusini's blanket. She had come to my aid just at the right time. We had no difficulty

dead; but I had forgotten, a g
could not die, which is well, f
longeth to welcome thee.'

'Have a care, Untúswa, l
'Dost thou not fear?'

'Why, no,' I answered. '
me is greater than any which c
But thou, what canst thou fe
cannot die?'

I was but mocking him,
through the plot. He had pu
escape in the turmoil what tin
had been slain; and I laughed
first beholding him.

We left Tola lying there h
little distance, we said out all w
took leave of each other.

'Use care, Untúswa, for i
thine,' said Lalusini, as we pa

When she had gone I unbound Tola's ankles, and told him to walk. Now, seeing himself in my power, he began to talk fair. He promised to do all for me if I would but let him go—to rid me of my enemies, to make me the greatest man, next to the King. But I only mocked him.

'A live *izanusi* may do great things,' I said. 'But a dead *izanusi*—*whau!*—of what use is he? And, Tola, I seem to remember that thou art dead—dead by order of the Great Great One. How then canst thou serve me?'

Then he began on another story. He could teach me things—could reveal mysteries which would render me all-powerful against every form of harm. But I only laughed at this, saying that he would soon have an opportunity of testing his powers in his own favour; and thus, ever with a watchful eye upon him, we travelled on together until we entered the hollow where were the kraals of the Bapongqolo.

'There are many here who will give thee warm greeting, chief of the *izanusi*,' I said. 'Some even upon whom thou hast looked before.'

Now people began to crowd around us, and, recognising my prisoner, shouts of hatred and threats were hurled at him. They would have torn him from me, but I restrained them.

'Go, call Sifadu,' I said. 'I have brought him a long-desired guest.'

at the bidding of this hyena;
torment for long before they
at the mouth, rolled on the g
for this they cared nothing,
trick. They pricked him wi
came to again, roaring with l
he came to again, Sifadu app

'Welcome, Tola,' he cried
long awaited thee. Ha, an
shall be thine, ah, ah! a right

And thrusting his face c
doctor he gnashed his teeth
to-be-restrained fury that I
seized the other with his chur

'Welcome, Tola,' he went
to thee, in the name of all m
eat up. *Whau!* There we
How nicely their tender lim

'Then there was my mother and another of my father's wives; they were lashed to death with switches to make them confess—by thy orders, Tola. *Hau!* Does this feel good—and this—and this?' And he lashed the prisoner's naked body with a green hide thong until the air rang with screams.

'Then there was my father, Kona. He was eaten by black ants—at thy word, Tola—by black ants. It took nearly a day for him to die in that torment, raving and roaring as a madman. And now I think this shall be thine own end. *Whau!* The black ants—the good black ants—the fierce black ants—the hungry black ants. They shall be fed—they shall be fed.'

Now, *Nkose*, looking at Sifadu, I thought he came very near being a madman at that moment, so intense was his hate and fury, so difficult the restraint he put upon himself not to hack the vile witch doctor into pieces there and then with his own hand. He foamed at the mouth, he ground his teeth, his very eyeballs seemed about to roll from their sockets. But the face of Tola, ah! never did I see such terror upon that of any living man. The crowd, looking on, roared like lions, stifling Sifadu's voice. They called to him the death of relatives—of fathers, of brothers, of wives, all of whose deaths lay at the doors of the *izanusi*. They wished that this one had a hundred lives that they might take a hundred days in killing him. There were several

nests of black ants at no distance. Then somebody cried out that there was a particularly large one under a certain tree.

'Under a tree!' cried Sifadu. 'Ha, I have an idea! Bring him along.'

They flung themselves upon Tola, whose wild howling was completely drowned by the ferocious yells of the crowd. But as they were dragging him roughly over the ground Sifadu interposed.

'*Gahlé*, brothers. Do not bruise him. The ants like their meat uninjured.'

Amid roars of delight the miserable wretch was dragged to the place of torment. Already some had knocked the top off the ants' nest, and were stirring it with sticks to infuriate the insects. Right over the nest grew a long bough a little more than the height of

severed ears, everywhere—the Bapongqolo crowded around gloating over his torments, and shouting into his ears the names of those whom he himself had doomed to a like torment. It was long indeed before he died, but though I have seen many a terrible form of death, never did I see any man suffer as did this one. And yet, *Nkose*, it was just that he should, for had not he himself been the means of dooming many innocent persons to that very death? Wherefore the revenge of the refugees was a meet and a just one.

CHAPTER XX.

THE BAPONGQOLO RETURN.

NOTWITHSTANDING that I, and I alone, had brought to him his bitterest enemy to be dealt with, Sifadu's manner towards me became, as time went on, more and more one of suspicion and distrust. He feared lest I should desire the chieftainship of this refugee clan; for by this time I was as completely one of themselves as he was, and he thought, perhaps rightly, that a man

fear of his prowess that none disputed his supremacy. But he was of a quarrelsome disposition, fierce and terrible when roused, and had a sullen and gloomy mind; whereas I, for my part, have ever got on well among fighting-men, and as for gloomy thoughts, *whau!* they are the worst kind of *muti*, worse than useless indeed. True, I who once had been among the first of a great nation was now an outlaw and an exile from two great nations; but men's fortunes change, and it might well be that in the near future my serpent would remember me, and my place be higher than ever —indeed I dared not think how high.

News at length reached us of another great battle. The Amabuna had again advanced upon Nkunkundhlovu, but before they could reach it a large *impi* sent by Dingane had reached them. *Whau!* that was a fight, said our informants. The Amabuna had drawn their waggons together, as their manner is, and the Amazulu strove for half a day to carry their camp with a rush. But it was of no use. The long guns shot hard and quick, and when the *impi* got almost within striking distance, and would have swarmed over the waggons, the Amabuna loaded their guns with several small bullets at a time, instead of only one, and our warriors went down in heaps. They could not stand against it, and this time a tale of defeat was brought back to the King.



knew better than to be ca
on one side and his own re
So he had decided to retire

This was the news whi
and whereas this would b
which the King would mak
longer. So we were forced

Now, Sifadu's plan w
band of refugees to Mpande
among us of late trying to
that prince. But my mind
I had no great opinion of
was a real King—one to wl
My flight had been due to t
of Tambusa, not to the
and, now that the Great G
by his enemies, I desired to
him. On this matter, too,
time to time, was of the sar

what he expected of it. The warriors came, several hundreds of them, in full war adornments, and fully armed, and Sifadu addressed them in a long speech. He recalled how it was that they came to be there, living the life of exiles and outcasts. He reminded them of their relatives slain, their houses stamped flat, their cattle seized to swell the herds of Dingane. The miserable cheat, Tola, whose bones lay broken and scattered around the nest of the black ants, in which they had put him to a just death, was only the mouthpiece of Dingane; the real oppressor was the King himself. Now, would they put themselves beneath the foot of such a King as that when they might obtain revenge for their wrongs, and at the same time lead a quiet life by doing *konza* to one who had promised them immunity and reward if they aided him now? But they must do this quickly for their own sakes, for their former oppressor with what remained of his army would be upon them in their retreat immediately.

Thus spoke Sifadu, but his words, and the words of others who argued in like manner, were not received as he intended. By more than half of those assembled they were received in silence. The old instinct of trained and disciplined warriors rendered these averse to turning against the King, especially so great a king as Dingane. Besides, it was by no means certain that even a combination of both forces against him would

went in to offer our spears
pressed by enemies, would rig
should we all regain our pla
outlaws no longer.

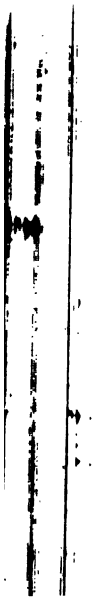
As I went on, the murmur
my words grew into shouts.
tired of their runaway state, a
set themselves right. They w
of the rule of Sifadu.

This Sifadu saw, and leap
ablaze with fury, he came at n
So quickly was it done that I
up my shield. So powerful
pierced the tough bull-hide
Sifadu, following up his atta
over my shield with his knob-
blow, and partly reached me.
infuriate with the pain. So
defence and went at Sifadu wi

looked as though a bloody battle was about to be fought. But some cried aloud against interference, saying that the two of us should strive for the mastery, and to this counsel I added my voice. Sifadu, though, had no voice save to growl and grind his teeth like a maddened beast.

So we fought, we two—none hindering. Our shields flapped together, and for a moment we were immovable —pressing each other equally hard — each striving to run in under the guard of the other. Then the spear-blades—Sifadu having disentangled his—would flash and glance like threads of fire as we leaped and feinted —yet neither of us able to drive home either stroke or stab. A silence had fallen upon the onlookers now, and every head was bent eagerly forward. All this I could see, while never taking my gaze from my enemy.

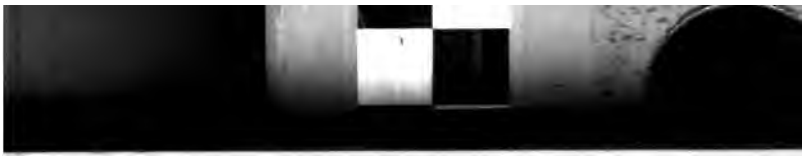
At last my chance came. Pretending to stumble, I threw myself forward, and with one swift sweep of my assegai I sheared through Sifadu's leg, gashing the thigh to the bone. He sank to the earth uttering a terrible howl. All the muscles were divided—from the principal blood-vessels red jets were spurting. *Whau!* He was in a sea of it. But even then, weakening each moment, he gathered strength to hurl his great knob-stick at my face. I was prepared for this, however, and caught it on my shield; nor did I hurry to run in and finish him, knowing that while he could move a finger



Ntelani never yet refused a
He made no reply, glarir
soon he sank down into u
And all the warriors shout
save some few—near friends
cared nothing. And present
them came to me, and we ta
out my plan of returning
once.

'*Whau*, Untúswa! Thou
thy youth; it is fitting that t
now,' said one of them, afte
not well, brothers?' turning

'*E-hé! Siyavuma!*'* the
Nkose, I became chief of the
the Wanderers; but, in tr
brief, indeed, for it might p
quick end both of chief and t
Now that we had thus dec



concealment in the recesses of the Ngome forests, while we, to the number of several hundreds, marched forth.

Before we crossed the White Umfolosi, I and other of the principal of the refugees climbed to the heights overlooking the Mahlabatini plain. It was somewhat early in the morning, but the brightness of the new day was dimmed—dimmed by a great cloud. Far away to the southward it rose, that cloud—thicker and thicker, higher and higher—a great dull pillar of smoke. Nkunkundhlovu was in flames.

Through the thickness of the smoke-cloud we could see the red leap of the fire. Then was amazement our master. Had the Amabuna gained a victory—so great a victory that they had been able to penetrate to the Great Place of the Elephant whose tread shaketh the world? *Whau!* it could not be. The marvel was too great.

But as we looked, lo! over the rise which lay back from the river came dense black masses—masses of men —of warriors—for in the morning sunlight we could see the glint of their spears. They moved in regular rank, marching in columns, in perfect order. In perfect order! There lay the whole situation. This was no defeat. The Great Great One, for reasons of his own, had fired Nkunkundhlovu before retreating.

Nearer they drew, those masses of warriors—on, on



burned within us at the
longed to be among tl
We had had more than
leopards.

'Ho, Siyonyoba!' I
refugees. 'Form up o
down now and throw in

Right down we we
retreating nation was
waves; and there, on the
repulsed by you English
Nkose, when we thought
soldiers, there did we wan
bring our lives in our ha
the King.

I had sent on men
arrival, and now, as we d
either side of us so as to

A dead silence lav ur

never desired to serve any King. Their fugitive life had hardened the Bapongqolo. Even the picked regiments of Dingane's army could not surpass them for hardihood and uprightness of bearing; and though we were probably going to our death, my blood thrilled with pride that I was the elected leader of so splendid a band.

I gave a signal, and striking their shields in measure as they marched, the Bapongqolo raised a great song in praise of Dingane:

There hovers aloft a bird,
An eagle of war,
In circles and swoops
It floats above the world.
The eye of that eagle
Would burn up the world.
But the world is allowed to live.
So clement, so merciful, is that eagle who restrains his wrath.
He retires but to swoop and strike again.
Hau! The enemies of that war-eagle shall melt away like yonder smoke.
A vulture who devours the flesh of men;
So is that bird.
Yonder is flesh that he shall presently eat.
So great is he,
He retires but to swoop and strike again.'

So our song thundered forth as we marched straight onward. I gave another signal. Immediately every shield and weapon fell to the ground with one crash, and advancing nearer weaponless, we bent low, a forest

of heads, and from every tongue in one roar there ascended the '*Bayéte*.' For we were now in the presence of the King.

In stern silence Dingane sat gazing upon us. Then he, too, gave a signal. Immediately an armed regiment moved across our rear. Between us and the weapons we had thrown down stood a wall of armed men, and in this I read our sentence of death. We had risked our chance and had failed. By my counsels, I had led these hundreds of brave men to their doom.



CHAPTER XXI.

THE EMBASSY OF TAMBUSA.

'WHAT do I see? Untúswa, the wanderer? Untúswa, who fled from the north to *konza* to another King? Ha! Greeting, Untúswa, for it seems long since we have beheld thee.'

So spake Dingane, softly, flatteringly, even as Umzilikazi was wont to do what time the stake or the alligators were preparing for somebody, and I indeed felt dead already.

'And these,' went on the King, bending his stern gaze upon my following. 'A warrior-like band indeed, and it seems a pity to slay such, yet must they all die.'

This he said almost to himself, else had the slayers been at work already. And I—the boldness of desperation came into me then.

'We are the King's cattle,' I said. 'We are here to place our lives beneath the foot of the Elephant.

Yet, O Ruler of the World, there are some who should taste the goring of our horns. We are the King's fighting-bulls. And, Great Great One, suffer us ere we die to spill once more the blood of the King's enemies.'

'Yet, Untúswa, it sometimes happens that fighting-bulls, growing mad, turn and gore their owners. They had better have been slain first,' said Dingane, with dark suspicion in his tone.

Now I saw what was to be done, though I hardly knew what to say.

'I would ask the Great Great One wherefore these are here at all, but that they may drink the blood of the King's enemies?' I urged, amazed at my own boldness. 'Were they here for any other purpose,

carved trunk of a tree, the great white shield held aloft at the back of his head, the King sat, silent, stern, gloomy looking. His attitude was that of one who waited. Waited for what? For the carrying out of his order decreeing our death?

Then some new event was astir. There stood before the King a woman. Now my followers dared to breathe again, and the sound went up from every chest like a sob of relief. And seeing who the woman was, my own relief became greater still, for she was my sorceress-wife.

'Hearken, Mahlula,' said the King. 'See you these?'

'I see them, Great Great One,' she answered, sweeping a majestic glance over us. 'They are those known as the Bapongqolo. They are here to lay their lives beneath the foot of the Elephant, and to crave the right to die fighting for him.'

'And how dost thou know that, my sister?' said Dingane suspiciously.

'It is easily known, Father of the Wise, and that not even by my *múti*,' she answered. 'There are many among them known by name, and all have the look of forest-dwellers. And he at their head, look at him.'

'Ha! And is it for good or for ill that they are here?'

'For good, Ruler of the Great. For these are fine

wielders of the spear. And they are many,' she answered.

'That is well,' said Dingane. 'You wanderers, I give you your lives. You shall join these lion-cubs, and plenty of prey lies awaiting your teeth.'

For some moments, *Nkose*, the roar that went up from all men's throats would seem about to split the world, for to the praises rolled forth from those who were thus spared was added the *bonga* of the whole army.

'Now talk we of Untúswa,' said the King, when this had quieted down. 'There is that about him which I like not entirely. What of him, Mahlula?'

She looked at me long and earnestly, as though she had never seen me before, but in her sweet eyes I read hope and courage. Then she said:

we all gathered up our weapons again we thundered forth the war-song of Dingane. Then, when we had formed up at the place pointed out to us, in truth it seemed that the army had received a most valuable addition in ourselves. Then dancing was ordered, and the slaughter of cattle, and there was much feasting.

Now during an earlier part of the war the Amabuna had sent messages to Dingane proposing peace, and to such the King had listened. Trouble was threatening at home, for Mpande, the brother of Dingane, was still plotting, and had by now collected a considerable following. Further, the Amabuna were increasing in strength, numbers having crossed the mountains to join them; moreover, several of the tribes who did *konza* to the royal House had forgotten their tribute, sheltering themselves behind the Amabuna. So Dingane had listened to the peace proposals of the Amabuna, and had agreed to pay nearly twenty thousand cattle, and to return the guns and horses taken at Nkunkundhlovu. For a space then there was peace. The Amabuna did not even want the cattle just then; they would rather we should herd them for the time being. So far good.

But one day there came news. Mpande had crossed the Tugela and had fled to the Amabuna, declaring that he feared for his life. *Au!* and long since he would have

owned no life to fear for, had the King but listened to the counsels of Tambusa, who would have caused him to be slain. But it was too late now, and already Dingane had reason to repent him of his mercy, for now that Mpande had promised them to divide the nation the Amabuna, ignoring all former promises and arrangements, sent word to Dingane demanding from him double the number of cattle at first agreed upon, and without even awaiting his reply they prepared to advance upon Nkunkundhlovu.

Not for nothing had Mpande plotted. He had gained over to his cause Nongalaza, an induna of importance. Nongalaza was old, and suffered from swollen limbs; but he was a skilled and courageous commander, and he took with him to the side of Mpande and the Amabuna the strength of four full

Mpande and who witnessed that which was now done.

Tambusa entered the camp of the Amabuna attended by Nkombazana, one of his own followers. He was received but coldly by the Amabuna. Why had they broken faith with the Great Great One who sits at Nkunkundhlovu? he asked. They had demanded twice the number of cattle at first agreed upon. They were preparing to invade the country, and had declared their intention of setting up Mpande as King, having deposed Dingane. Who were they who took to themselves the right to make and unmake Kings for the Zulu nation? asked Tambusa, proud and defiant. Dingane was King of the Zulu nation, and as King he would live and die.

'Ah! die perhaps, that is right,' said one of the Amabuna, with an evil laugh.

'A King of the Amazulu does not die of words nor of fear,' replied Tambusa, fiercely scornful. 'Yet hearken to my message, even the "word" of the Great Great One, whose mouth I am. Thus he speaks: "We made an agreement, have I not kept it? I have returned the guns and horses I promised; I have sent in part of the cattle I promised, I would have sent in all, but you preferred to leave the remainder with me for the present. Well, it is there, send and take it, or shall I send it in? Now you demand twice



mouth to say so. I
listen to and bring ba
spoke the Great Great O

'Ha! The Great (
live!' jeered some of th
murderer, who shall soon

To this Tambusa m
proudly erect, on his face
as he could hardly con
Amabuna spoke:

'To you we have noth
—for so he designated th
say. When the time com
will, very soon.'

'We, too, know how
'*Hlalani gahle!* I retire.'

He turned to leave—t
pointed full upon him at b

'Halt—Kafir!'

his forehead swelled until they seemed about to burst with the pressure of his head-ring. 'Kafir!' Thus these refuse whites dared to address the chief induna of the royal race of Zulu, second only in greatness to the King himself! But he was helpless, for, as a peace ambassador, he had of course been obliged to lay down his arms on entering the camp.

Now he turned to the leaders of the Amabuna, who were talking with their heads together.

'See you this?' he said, waving his hand towards the line of men who stood threatening him with their guns. 'See you this? I, a peace messenger, am insulted and threatened. I, a peace messenger, am detained, when I would depart as I came. In truth, it is not good to trust to the good faith of the Amabuna.'

'In truth it is not good to trust to the good faith of the Amazulu,' answered the leader sternly. 'Say, were not our people peace messengers—our people whose bones lie outside Nkunkundhlovu—who trusted in the good faith of that murderer, your chief?'

'Ha! But you? You are a holy people—a people of God, you told the King. We are only poor, ignorant black people,' said Tambusa, taunting them, in his scornful wrath.

'But there is a God of justice,' quickly replied

the leader, 'and He has delivered you into our hands to be dealt with as one of the chief murderers of our people. The others He will deliver to us in time. But enough of that. This is the matter now. The treacherous and cruel murder of our people at Nkunkundhlovu was counselled by you, Tambusa. By you it was planned and arranged, by your orders it was carried out. What have you to say?'

'That is not the matter about which I am here,' replied the induna. 'If ye would have me answer on that matter, ye should have sent men to bring me here, if they could have done it. It is a matter as to which now I will say no word.'

'That is perhaps as well,' answered the leader, 'for here we have enough to prove your guilt over and over again.' And with the words Tambusa saw the trap

of contempt and scorn only deepened on the face of Tambusa as he stood there in his great stature like some mighty tree, while they snarled and leaped around him like jackals. At last he who sat at the head of the council succeeded in quieting them.

'Then you have nothing to say—no reason to urge why the punishment of death should not be dealt out to you?' said this man, speaking solemnly. 'There may be others, perhaps—others more guilty than yourself. If there is anything you can tell us——'

But here he stopped, for Tambusa had interrupted him by a loud, harsh laugh, so fierce that it sounded like a war-cry.

'Others? Anything I can tell you?' he repeated, with a very roar. 'I, an induna of the right hand of the Great King, to give *you* information! *Whau!* ye must be madmen. Not to save a hundred lives would I give you information as to even the youngest boy just enrolled among those who bear shields. Do I fear death—I, Tambusa? Why, I stare it in the face every day. And I think, *Ntshwai-ntshwai*,* when death has been the game some of you must have seen my face before.'

'He confesses!' cried those standing around. 'Enough—enough. Let him be shot.'

* A nickname bestowed upon the Boers by the Zulus, being in fact an imitation of the swishing sound of their wide leather breeches as they moved.

The leader of the council, having obtained silence, spoke:

'On your own showing, Tambusa, you are guilty of counselling and planning the cruel and treacherous murder of our brothers at Nkunkundhlovu while they were at that place by the invitation of the King and Zulu nation. They were set upon and slain in cold blood while partaking of Zulu hospitality; and for your share in this unprovoked and abominable massacre this council adjudges you, Tambusa, to suffer death; and that, in execution of this sentence, you be taken outside the camp and forthwith shot.'

There was a deep silence as the leader ceased speaking. It was broken by the voice of Tambusa:

'I, too, have something to say.'

All started. Would this braggart they thought



Then, with flashing eyes, he began bellowing out the number of Amabuna he had slain. Why, he had helped to batter out the brains of that very party, and had ripped up white women with his own spear what time we rushed the waggon camp. If his chief was to die, he would die with him. A warrior must follow his chief everywhere.

Well, he obtained his wish. The leaders would have spared him at first, but when they heard him glorying in the slaughter of their countrymen—and countrywomen, too—they soon desisted in their attempts, and the Amabuna at large howled for his blood.

So Tambusa and his young follower were ordered to proceed in the midst of their armed guard to the outskirts of the camp to meet their death.

No further word did Tambusa speak, save one of commendation of the bravery shown by his follower. He strode forth in the midst of his guard, his head thrown back—his great stature and fearless countenance worthy of a Zulu of the noblest rank and birth. When they ordered him to halt he did so, and, facing round upon the line of levelled guns, stood proudly, with folded arms, his young follower standing equally fearless at his side. A line of flame shot forth, and a rolling crash. Tambusa and Nkombazana sunk quietly to the ground, pierced by many bullets, dying without a struggle.

every way worthy of
sat at the right hand





CHAPTER XXII.

THE DIVIDING OF THE NATION.

THE time had been well chosen for the return of the Bapongqolo to the heart of the nation, for now the Amabuna were advancing upon us, and with them Nongalaza at the head of a strong army, made up of the rebel traitors whom he had induced to desert their true king. The killing of Tambusa while on a message of peace had infuriated Dingane. He ordered Nkunkundhlovu to be burnt, vowing to rebuild it no more until he had driven the rebels and their white friends from the land, and exacted a fearful vengeance for the slaughter of his faithful induna. So the *izanusi* were called up, and we were doctored for battle, and Lalusini, or Mahlula, as she was known here, together with her band of girls decked out in their richest dresses, stood forth and heartened the warriors by their songs of battle and victory; even as she had once heartened us to defeating, under the shadow of my white shield, these very warriors with whom I now fought, and a section of whom I was

now leading. Yes, these hundreds of men, the Bapong-qolo, were worth much to Dingane now.

The day had come at last, and the nation was divided. And now, with the one great struggle for the very life of the nation at our gates, Dingane showed himself, as he never had so shown himself before, as a noble and worthy warrior-king of a mighty warrior people.

It was the morning of the battle, that great struggle which should mean, to him and his, all or nothing. Ha! he was great, he was majestic, that warrior King, as he came forth to address his children—to hearten us for what lay before us. Not that we needed burning words of encouragement, for of all that dense array crouching there behind their shields, not one at that moment but

strike terror once more upon the world, or to become a forgotten thing. For a space it has been hidden, but only that it might blaze forth again the more brightly. Yonder there come against us enemies. There are those who came among us with false words—calling themselves a holy people—and striving, with fair words, to wrest from us the lands which, bit by bit, we have added to the greatness of our nation—a people which knows not how to keep faith—a people which, in its greed, knows not how to observe its own agreements—a nation which slays ambassadors bearing a peace message. But worse. With that people, who comes? Who but they who would divide the nation—who, to do this, have not scrupled to place their neck beneath the foot of this other race—of these Amabuna, the scum and refuse of all white peoples—they of our own blood—they who have grown great under the shadow of the House of Senzangakona. These indeed are worse than dogs, for even a dog will not bite the hand that fattens him. Ha! and with them is one of the House of Senzangakona—yet not, for it cannot be that a real bough of that great and royal tree can have joined with the refuse of all the white races, to turn and destroy his father's house. Some bastard must it be—changed at birth—some low, base bastard, foisted by fraud upon the House of Senzangakona. And he, he who would, by the favour of the Amabuna, call himself King, where is he? Not

among those who come against us. He is not even a leader of men. See him skulk behind the guns of the Amabuna while my dog, Nongalaza, leads his army for him. His army! *Hau!* a pack of cur dogs whom the lion-cubs of Zulu shall disperse howling, for how shall so base and traitorous a band of runaways face and stand against the might of these?'

And as Dingane waved his hand over the assembled army a sound went up like the sullen roar of a sea-wave that curls and breaks. The King went on:

'My children! this is a time, not for talking, but for doing. I, your father, am here with you—I, your leader. Let the lion-cubs of Zulu fall on bravely under the eye of the lion. Lo! those who direct you are men to follow. Where is Umhlela? where is Silwane?



and outstretched arm, pointing with his spear towards the approaching host; and as the regiments formed up in columns and began their march, moving out over the plain like huge black serpents, the war-song of Dingane rolled forth like thunder upon the still and brooding air:

'Us 'eziteni!
Asiyikuza sababona.' *

Louder and louder it swelled, uttered in fierce, jerky roars, as the roars of ravening beasts who can no longer be restrained from their prey. Then the red mist was before all eyes. The host of Nongalaza was singing, too; but for that we had no ears, only eyes for the body of our foe. Our warriors now swung forward at a run, the ranks steadied and kept in line by the warning word of an induna, or a sub-captain. Otherwise none spoke.

Now they are before us. Their appearance is even as that of ourselves. They have the same shields, the same broad spears, the same discipline. But their courage? Ha! We have that—we, the chosen, we, the faithful. Now we are among them; there is the slap of shield meeting shield, the tramp of struggling feet, the soft tearing of spear ripping flesh. Ha! The red blood is flowing; warriors go down by hundreds—beaten to earth—ripped as they lie—as many of ours

* 'Thou art in among the enemy,
We shall never get a sight of him.'



the laboured panting
and clash of hard woo
heavy knob-sticks me
a skull—these are th
verily warring. But
side yields a foot's b
moment, to charge ag

Again and again
either side gain. Bo
trained in valour and d
Whau! there will be
so surely shall we mak

Now I, with the B
the left 'horn' of our
that of the enemy, the
great as our own, and
But what is the other '
have gained some sligh
see. Ha! Can it be



traitorous defection acts differently. Umhlela, watching and partly directing the battle from a little distance off, gives the word, and himself at the head of the force he has been holding in reserve, charges furiously upon these traitors, rolling them back upon the thick of Nongalaza's force, and throwing the latter into confusion. Umhlela is a small man and old, but never was there a braver one. He is in the hottest of the battle, and they whom he leads follow like lions. The tossing of shields, and the tramp and pushing of striving feet, shakes both earth and air. Ha! Umhlela is down. A wounded warrior, supposed to be dead, has sprung to his feet, and with last stroke has cleft the brave induna through the heart. But the rallying cry on the dying lips: 'On, children of Zulu! The Lion watches you,' thrills our people with renewed strength. Now we gain. The rebels are giving way. Now is the time. We press them harder and harder. Not hundreds now, but thousands lie slain, or writhing in death-throes. They are beginning to withdraw. The day is ours.

Is it? Ha! What is that shout, gathering in volume as it rolls along behind the rebel army—heartening those in front to face us more fiercely.

'They come, the Amabuna! The Amabuna are at hand!'

We who hear it can see Nongalaza riding on horseback along his rank—he and other of Mpande's indunas

—and with shout and gesture they point behind them, then wave their men on. And in the distance can be heard the rattle of the discharge of guns.

'They come, the Amabuna!'

That cry loses us the day. The younger regiments waver, fall into confusion, and flee. The men of the Imbele-bele—a splendid ringed regiment—stand their ground. So, too, do the Bapongqolo. Then we have work to do. One glance behind us, and we can see the land covered with fleeing fugitives; but the spot whence the King watched the battle is empty. We have saved the King.

Well, we are doomed. Thick and fast our warriors fall, being hugely outnumbered, and it wants but the coming of the Amabuna to make an end of us completely.



were less quick than we. Yet many were slain in that rout, and ere night fell the land seemed alive with pursuers and pursued. But I set my face in the direction of the Ngome forests, where my outlawry had been spent. There, I knew, were holes and retreats wherein not all the men of Nongalaza twice over would succeed in finding me.

And, as night fell, the dull red glow of burning kraals lit up the land, and from afar you could hear the exultant war-song—the song of victory. Yet not altogether, for the song of Mpande was the song of bondage too, in that he, a prince of the House of Senzangakona, had purchased his kingship dear; for he had purchased it at the price of doing *konza* to the Amabuna, in order to be allowed to hold it—in order to sit in the seat of Tshaka the Mighty, and of the warrior-king Dingane, who, however, might even yet be heard of again.

The slaughter on either side that day was immense, *Nkose*. Yet not by might or by bravery did Nongalaza win that victory. Oh, no! He won it by a trick. Had he not cried that the Amabuna were at hand, we should not have given way. But up till then we had gained no great advantage, and the approach of these people, who could gallop into our very midst and discharge their guns without harm to themselves, took all heart

out of our warriors, already hard pressed by the forces of Nongalaza, nearly equal as these were to our own. So we fled, and lost the day. Yet we need not have, for the Amabuna were not really coming. But a good general will despise no method of snatching a victory, and Nongalaza was right.



CHAPTER XXIII.

A HARD ORDEAL.

'WAKEN, Untúswa!'

The whisper was soft, so, too, was the touch, yet I sprang to my feet, grasping my spear. But at the same moment my grasp on it relaxed, for before me stood Lalusini.

Wearied with the hard fierce fighting of the day, I had crept into a secure hiding-place beneath a rock overhung with all manner of undergrowth, and had slept soundly. Yet my dreams had been full of warring and battle, and now my great assegai was clotted and foul with blood, and more than one deep gash on body or limb felt stiff and smarting.

But all thought of myself seemed at an end as I looked at Lalusini. There was a hard fierce look upon her face such as I had never seen there before, and in it I saw a strong likeness to Dingane.

'The time has come, Untúswa,' she said shortly. 'Take thy spear, look well to its point, and follow me.'

'That I will gladly do, Lalusini,' I answered. 'But, as we travel, tell me, what work is before me now?'

'One stroke of thy broad spear—the King's Assegai—ha, ha! it is well named—it will be a royal weapon indeed! One stroke of thy broad spear and we shall be great together, great even as I have often predicted to thee. Come! Let us hasten.'

There was an eager fierceness in her tone and manner that kept me marvelling; however, I would see what her plan was.

She led the way—not speaking. We passed beneath spreading forest trees, where the thick undergrowth impeded our advance, and the silence of the shade was only broken by the call of birds. It seemed as though men's feet had never trodden here; yet I knew the spot, for this was one of the very refuges I had at first







me, did not stir. Noiselessly I stepped beside it, and then as I bent down to gaze into the face, I could hardly forbear a start. It was the face of Dingane—the face of the King.

Yes ; it was the Great Great One himself. He was sound asleep, his head pillowed on one hand, interposed between it and the rock. But how came he here, he who moved armed men in their countless might—he before whom the nations trembled and hid their heads —how came he here, in hiding and alone?

But was he alone? It seemed so, for I could descry no sign—no sound of the presence of men. And while I thus gazed, again that soft whisper breathed into my ear, 'Strike, and strike hard! So shall we be great together!'

Strike! Nothing could have been easier. The large form lay there without movement, the heave of the breast, above the heart, turned towards me as though inviting the stroke. Yet, as I gazed, the noble majesty on the countenance of the sleeping King seemed to paralyse my arm. One blow, and Lalusini, by her sorcery, aided by my own warrior prowess, might set me upon Dingane's seat. Yet, I could not do it.

Then I thought the sleeper stirred.

'He wakes,' I whispered, withdrawing again behind the bushes. Lalusini followed me.

'And art thou so weak, Untúswa?' she said.

thy spear!'

Still I moved not, and she

'The blood of that Might sprung, and who caused me through it vengeance migl avenged? The time has come and striven. Now go, and mak so shall we be great together; alone—or small—with no help

Now I nerved myself. Tl threaten looked too terrible, fo as one bewitched.

'Go, Untúswa. My *múti* is waken too readily,' she whispe tones, gently pushing me to more.

Again I parted the bushes again I stood over the sleeping shield lay almost beneath him. a



would be an easy one at that moment; but alone, deserted, and asleep—no, I could not thus slay him.

And then I thought of the favour he had shown me, even to allowing me the chance of escaping to the Bapongqolo, what time Tambusa and Umhlela had striven to compass my death. I thought how he had spared me, spared the Bapongqolo, and had raised me to honour when all men trembled at his frown; and now that he lay here, a deserted fugitive, I could not turn against him. His life lay within my hand, yet I could not take it. No, not to win greatness for myself; not even to retain Lalusini's love.

'Farewell, Untúswa!' came that soft whisper behind me. 'Farewell; we may meet no more.'

She stepped swiftly through the belt of bushes. For a moment I stood stupidly gazing after her, then I followed. But she had disappeared. I called her, I searched for her. All in vain.

Then I went back to the sleeping King. Him I would save at all events. I had helped in saving him during the battle yesterday, by holding back the *impi* of Nongalaza; to-day I would save him entirely by myself. Even now Lalusini might have gone to find those who would carry out her bidding readily enough.

slowly. Then he sprang up
spears.

'Who art thou?' he cri
lion-like glance. 'Ha! Un
traitor perhaps. How sayest
are traitors.'

'No traitor am I, Black
'It is safer, however, for the Li
lair elsewhere.'

In the glance which Ding
distrust, suspicion, contempt
of fear.

'What, Untúswa, and art
thou, the wanderer—thou who
whom my hand has fed have de
their spears against me? *Wh*

'Who am I to fill the ears
with words,' I answered. 'Ye
or no wanderer. I



where thou canst sit still in safety until the army is collected again. It was badly routed in the more open plain, yet here in these fastnesses none will dare venture—not even the Amabuna—until the trumpeting of the Elephant shall scatter the traitors and rebels once more. Such is my counsel, Ruler of the Great.'

'I will even trust thee, Untúswa,' said the King. 'And now let us go forth.'

I picked up my shield and weapons, which, of course, I had let fall, being in the royal presence, and we took our way thence, I walking in advance and spying carefully around to guard against possible surprise.

For long we thus travelled, and when night came we sat and feasted upon the meat of a young impala which I had killed by a lucky spear-cast; but we slept away from any fire, and in a place of secure concealment. On the morrow we kept on our way once more, and by noon came to the resting-place I had designed for the King. This was a group of caves, somewhat high up among the rocks of the Lebombo range. Beneath, the slope fell away, bushy, but not too thickly so as to prevent us from descrying the approach of friend or foe, while on either side so strewn with rocks and boulders was the base of the cliff that retreat would be easy in the event of pursuit.

'*Whau*, Untúswa!' said the King, with a laugh in

to mind the words of Sifadu
when Dingane himself would
strange it was that my enforc
the principal indunas should t
the King with a place of refug
day of his downfall.

So we rested there for ma
Yes, this dreaded one, before
nations had trembled, now tre
entirely does adversity draw th
together. Yet never for a mo
was that I thus foregathered
aught that was unbecoming in
of mine towards the King—the
the great Zulu nation.

Often would the thought of
of her purposed revenge, whicl
through me. This, then, was
plotted—this the means by w

Wherefore now I rejoiced that I had not slain the King—had not slain a sleeping and helpless man at the bidding of a woman, even though that woman were Lalusini.

Sometimes a gloom would settle upon the mind of Dingane. His sun had set, he would declare. The power of Zulu was a thing of the past, now that the nation was divided. But at such times I would say what I could to cheer him, telling him portions of my own story, which, in truth, had been wonderful. The army was scattered. Time was needed to collect it, and that time, I thought, had now arrived. I saw that everything was at hand that the Great One might need, and then I prepared to depart.

'I know not, Untúswa,' he said, as I took leave of him. 'But for thy faithfulness these many days I might bethink me that soon thou shouldst return at the head of an *impi* to earn the reward promised by Mpande and the Amabuna to him who should deliver to them the real King ---'

But I interrupted; somewhat unbecomingly, I admit:

'If that is thy thought, father, slay me as I stand,' and dropping my weapons I advanced a pace or two.

'Nay, nay, Untúswa,' he said, 'that is what I might have thought, not what I thought,' replied the King gently. 'Fare-thee-well, Untúswa, and may success

be thine. Fare-thee-well, Untúswa, my servant—Untúswa, my friend.'

'*Bayéte!*' I cried, with right hand aloft. Then I started upon my errand, and more than ever did I rejoice that my spear had remained bright in the face of the entreaties of Lalusini.

CHAPTER XXIV.

THE STROKE OF SOPUZA.

'*Bayéte, Nkulu-nkulu!*
Father! we thy children have found thee at last!
Lo! long have we wandered weeping, but now we are comforted.
Come forth and show us the brightness of thy head-ring.'

THUS sang a great half circle of armed warriors, mustered on the slope beneath Dingane's place of concealment.

Thus again and again they sang, but still Dingane did not appear.

For I had fulfilled my errand, *Nkose*, and this was the result—an array of warriors nearly as large as the original strength of the Amandebéli what time we followed Umzilikazi over the mountains. I had gone hither and thither, had turned night into day, had not spared myself, or feared danger. I had found out and rallied all the scattered bands which at heart had remained faithful to Dingane. I had drawn men from the kraals of Mpande himself, and from beneath the very shadow of the camps of the Amabuna. But one

moon had died since I took leave of the King—I alone. Yet here I was, returning at the head of a splendid army—an army nearly as large as that with which Umzilikazi had founded a new nation. In truth, Dingane had not trusted me in vain.

Here were Silwane and Nomapela, and others of the old war-captains. Here was a remnant of the old Imbele-bele regiment—the Bapongqolo, too, my staunch refugees—and as much of the army as had survived the defeat by Nongalaza. All had in truth thought Dingane to be dead, but as I passed through their midst carrying word to the contrary, they had sprung to arms, and mustering swiftly and secretly, had returned to do *konza* to their rightful King. And here they were.

Now they redoubled their entreaties, singing louder

praise and entreaty. The King appeared again. This time he did not go back. He surveyed them a few moments in silence, then he called:

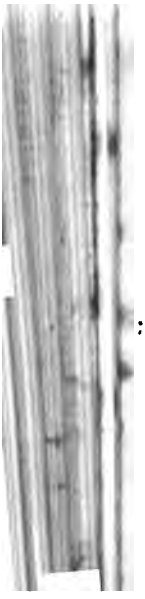
'Come hither, Untúswa.'

I disarmed, and crept up to where he stood.

'Sit here, Untúswa,' he said, pointing to the ground at his feet. 'This is thy place. For the rest they can still remain at a distance.'

So I sat, *Nkose*, thinking how strange it was that I, who had begun my life as the son of an induna, should live to become the principal fighting chief of Umzilikazi's army, and then come to earn the confidence of the Great Great One, the King of the mighty Zulu nation—should be bidden to sit near him while all others were kept at a distance—should live to become the most trusted councillor of two mighty Kings; for such I saw was the honour before me now.

Then Dingane, lifting up his voice, addressed the warriors. For the battle against Mpande's force he commended them greatly. Their bravery was worthy of all praise, and not for lack of it on their part had Nongalaza won the day, having done so by a mere trick—a clever trick, it was true. But when they fled their terror had been too great. They had forgotten their King. One man alone had cleaved to the King, and that man was Untúswa—a wanderer—not even one of themselves. Still, remembering how valiantly



reproaches now turned to n
went on :

The nation was divide
once more. With such as
him this might soon be do
of Zulu could not sit down
one who was a mere slav
would return—return to th
great Zulu power, their righ
had remained faithful would
honour.

As the Great One finis
roar went up from the assemb
him as their guide, their fa
by every title of *bonga*. The
to songs and dances, for all
longer a broken remnant, a
their head once more.

The plan which Di-

the Amazulu, the conquerors of the world, holding his seat by favour of white people—and such white people! But it could not last—no, it could not last. The heavens might well fall.

We moved down to a more accessible site in the Ngome wilds, and there kraals were erected, and time was bestowed upon gathering together such of the nation as remained faithful, and encouraging others to come in. Meanwhile a careful look-out was kept upon a possible invasion; but Mpande, who seemed not to care about venturing beyond the Tugela, made no hostile movement, neither did the Amabuna, and for a time we enjoyed rest and a breathing-space while our plans were maturing.

I, for my part, was now advanced to a position of great honour, not less indeed than that formerly held by Tambusa himself. That induna was now dead; so too was Umhlela, as I have told you, *Nkose*; and such of my enemies who survived had but one fear now, and that was lest I might turn my greatness to account in compassing their destruction. But of this I had no thought, so completely was my mind full of how to restore the ascendency of Dingane and the might of the nation.

All this while I saw nothing of Lalusini, nor by the most deftly veiled questionings could I obtain tidings of her from any. Whither had she gone? Would she not reappear as she had done before?

And for all my greatness my heart was sore—very sore, as I thought of her and longed for her; yet never for a moment did I repent me that I had not slain the King at her bidding.

Now Dingane had built for himself a great kraal on one of the wildest slopes of the Ngome hills. It was surrounded by dense forests and rocks and precipices, and the ways of approach being but few, and always securely guarded, the King felt safe from all possibility of attack. But shortly an alarm was given. *Impis* from Mpande were reported near—not to attack us, for they were not large enough—but as spies. So the King sent forth two regiments under Silwane to cut them off, if possible, so that, finding themselves surrounded, they would accept the offer of their lives, and return to their allegiance. I, however, was not

I, too, retired to rest. For long I lay thinking, not able to sleep; then I dozed off and dreamed. It seemed to me that once more I was back at Kwa'zingwenya. Once more, my heart full of rage over the disappearance of Lalusini, I was creeping stealthily to slay Umzilikazi in his sleep. Once more I sprang upon him, spear uplifted. Once more I heard the shouts of his body-guard, as they swarmed to his aid. Then I awoke—awoke suddenly, and with a start. Ha! the shouts were real—I was not dreaming now—and with them I heard the hurried tramp of rushing feet go by my hut.

Those were times for quick thought—for quick action. In a moment I was outside the hut, fully armed, listening. Ha! The tumult, the shouting and tramp of feet! It came from the *isigodhlo*.

Thither I sprang. I could see the King's body-guard there before me, for the moon was up; could see the flash of spears, the sheen of white shields. Several dark bodies lay upon the ground, and at these they were stabbing and hacking. Just as I came up another was dragged forth by the heels and cut to pieces there and then.

The King had been stabbed. Such was the news now spoken in awed whispers. But, who were these? Emissaries of Mpande? No. By their head-rings and ornaments they were not of us. They were Amaswazi.

Quickly I took in what had happened. There was the hole in the fence through which these had crept. Even as I had stolen upon Umzilikazi so had these stolen upon Dingane, but with better effect.

Howls of horror over the deed went up from all. By this time the whole kraal was aroused, and such few as were left in it came flocking out. But I, being in great authority, quelled the tumult.

'How happened it?' I asked.

'Thus, father,' replied the captain of the King's guard, a young man, but just ringed. 'Yonder crept these scorpions,' pointing to the hole I had already observed, 'and struck the Great Great One in his sleep. But now are they all dead, we have made an end of them.'

'It were better to have prevented the deed, Sodosi,'

could take care of him. I had another matter to attend to.

For in the gloom just in front of me I could hear a faint and stealthy rustle, and towards it I moved, silently and swiftly, listening the while lest I might be drawn into a trap. No! It was but one man. I could see a form, dark and tall, moving from tree to tree, but it seemed as though I would never come within striking distance. I was now far beyond my followers, but I felt somehow that the capture of this one fugitive was to be desired more than the deaths of all the others put together.

Still this figure eluded me, now showing for a moment in the moonlight, now vanishing in the shade. Here at last was an open space and the runaway could not diverge. One final effort, a mighty rush, and I was upon him.

'Yield now,' I roared, raising my bloodstained spear. 'Yield or I cleave thee to the heart.'

'As thou wouldst have done Tola,' said a soft voice; and then I stood staring. The tall figure of the fugitive had halted, and, turned towards me, under the full light of the moon, I beheld the face of Lalusini.

'What hast thou done, woman?' I stammered, feeling bewitched.

'The stroke of Sopuza has fallen,' she answered



But Lalusini laughed, a lo

'Art thou going to delive
by the cubs of the Lion who i

For some moments I gaze
changed into a stone. Then I

'*Hlala gahle*, Lalusini,' I
Again she laughed.

'*Hamba gahle*, son of N
shall again be together, but
great—ah, no!—never now.'

Her words seemed to beat w
my way backward through th
that in them which I liked. N
deliver her over to vengeance;
Lalusini—ah, no! I could not

'The stroke of Sopuza' had i
Nkose, were the words of a prop
by an old magician as to the
should one day find out Dingan

Quickly I took my way back to the kraal. The King was not dead, and had been inquiring for me; and when I entered the royal house, he spoke drowsily, calling me by name. I found that he had received several stabs, one of them cleaving his entrails in a frightful manner. He would hardly see the rising of another sun.

'Hither, Untúswa,' he murmured. 'Didst thou make an end of those scorpions?'

'An end, indeed, Black Elephant,' I answered.

'All of them?'

'That is yet to be done, father. There will shortly be howling throughout the Swazi nation, for of that race are those who struck the Great Great One.'

'Yet I thought—or dreamed—that the hand of a woman was in it,' said the King.

'Ha! the women of the Amaswazi shall help to pay the penalty, then,' I answered, fearful lest the Great Great One should have recognised Lalusini, whom I would fain save.

'No matter, the stroke of Sopuza has fallen—ah, yes, it has fallen at last,' he murmured. 'And now, Untúswa, send and gather together all the warriors. Bid that they come in full array of war; for I desire to feast my eyes upon the sight I have ever loved best.'

'That I have already done, father.'

'Thou art a very prince of indunas, Untúswa,' replied Dingane. 'Hast thou gathered in all?'

'All, father. I have sent swift runners to Silwane's *impi* and to all our outlying kraals.'

'That is well.'

Now the *izanusi* craved leave to enter, but Dingane would have none of them. There was but one in whose magic he had any faith, he said, and that was Mahlula; and since the battle Mahlula had been seen or heard of by none. Ha! I could have revealed a strange tale, *Nkose*, but that was furthest of all from my mind. Then the *izanusi*, thus refused admittance, set up a doleful howling outside the hut, until Dingane, wrathful, bade me go forth and drive them away, which I was glad to do.

All through the night I sat beside the King, never

borne forth, I supporting him; but although four stalwart warriors bent to the task, it was a hard one, for the men of the House of Senzangakona are large beyond the ordinary, as you know, *Nkose*.

Outside the kraal the warriors were mustered, squatting behind their great war-shields, forming a huge half circle even as on the day when they hailed the fugitive King in his place of concealment, only now their number had nearly doubled. There they sat, rank upon rank, motionless. As the King's chair was lowered to the ground the whole of this dense mass of armed men threw their war-shields to the earth and fell prostrate upon them, and in the roar of the '*Bayéte*' which thundered forth was a subdued growl of grief and wrath. Then they arose, and squatted crouching as before.

The eyes of the dying King kindled, as he swept his glance over this splendid army, and his form seemed to gather renewed life as he sat upright in his chair, his shield-bearer holding on high the great white shield behind him. Then he spoke:

'My children, I have called you here because I desire that the last sight my eyes shall rest on shall be the sight which they have always loved the most to behold, the sight of warriors under arms, of warriors of Zulu.

'What prouder name has the world ever known?



...e of the Amabuna, any
the lion, any calf who wo
rumble of the elephant, any
would drag the House of Se
beneath the shoes of the Ama
to do this. But you have
real King in shadow as in t
result. Look around on your
now should we have gone for
my intention to sit down h
would have swept the traitors o
Amabuna into one common p
and stamped them in there for

'I cannot talk many more w
But if you have been loyal a
well-being has ever been my c
brave deeds have ever been r
The nation has been divided, b
together again. I would have
faithful

'*Ma—yé!*' moaned the warriors, their heads bowed in grief as Dingane paused. Then, gathering once more fresh strength, with an effort the dying King went on, and his voice rolled clear and strong like a call to battle:

'Lo! I see not the end. I know not who shall reunite this people, who shall deliver it from slavery and disgrace—extinction; for now I must leave it. My eyes are dim and the Dark Unknown is closing in around me. Yet still my last gaze is upon that sight which is the grandest the world ever saw—the warriors of Zulu under arms. Farewell, warriors of Zulu!'

The voice ceased. The head drooped forward on the chest. The great form would have fallen prone from the chair but for those who stood by. The King was dead.

Through the dense ranks there shivered forth one deep moan, and for long no man stirred. All sat in silence, mourning thus the loss of their father and King.

So died Dingane, the second of the mighty Kings of Zulu. Even as the great Tshaka had died the death of the spear at his hand, so died he the death of the spear, being struck in his sleep. But he died as he had lived, and his was the death of a true warrior-king—his last gaze upon the ranks of his

assembled army—face to face with it—his last words to it, words of commendation and loving farewell—and who shall say, *Nkose*, that such was not a great and glorious death?

CONCLUSION.

We buried the King with great ceremony and the sacrifice of beasts; and the whole army sat around in deep silence, the silence of grief and mourning for that the nation was now left without a head; but it was a silence that was rendered more awesome by the death-rites of the *izanusi* and the wailings of the women. Only for a short while, however, was the Great Great One to sit upon that seat, for he was taken up again in the dead of night and removed to a secret grave, known to but very few, as the custom is to keep secret the burial-places of kings.

Yes, with the passing away of Dingane the army was as a body without a head. At such a time the thought would often be in my mind how Lalusini would have me seize the opportunity of putting myself in Dingane's place; for I too was of a royal tree—that of Dingiswayo, of the tribe of Umtetwa, whose place had been seized by Tshaka—yet not near enough was I to

was too great; a
a head, the warriors began to tal
the expediency of doing *konza* t
of that House. So we consul
Silwane and some of the principa
short time we sent messengers to
rightful King now, however he m
the Amabuna. But with the arı
the Great One who was dead turne
Mpande might perhaps remedy eve

Our messengers returned acc
including an induna of note, assuri
favour. That decided us.

It was a great day, the day th
reunited once more. Mpande sat ir
filed in to his kraal near the Tugela
not then been erected—singing son
to the new King; and when as c
number of those black ones threw
and shields and shouted aloud the
low before him, the look upon the f

who was no more. We had been faithful to our rightful King, and had cleaved to him through his reverses. The stroke of some evil wizard had laid that Great One low in the dark hours of the night, but the House of Senzangakona was not dead yet, and we, quick to see this, had hastened to cry the '*Bayéte*' to the head of that house, and the head of the Zulu nation. By reason of the fidelity we had shown he assured us of his favour, for upon such he felt he could rely.

Then the principal indunas of the returning army were called up, one by one, and 'named,' and thus were continued in the commands they had held up till now; some indeed being advanced to even greater honour—among them myself. And Mpande's word stood, for he ever regarded those who had adhered to Dingane with greater favour than those who had divided the nation with him. But that day was passed in great rejoicing, and many cattle were slaughtered, and the feasting went on far into the night.

Towards its close I retired to my hut, thinking perhaps to find there my Swazi wives, who had been given me by that Great One who was gone. But they were not there, nor was any—and while I was thinking what had become of them the door was pushed softly open, and a voice said:

'Now, Untúswa, do I return. Am I welcome?'



'Welcome indeed, Lalusin
then tired of thy sorcery?'

'I think that is so, Untúsw
is weariful in it. I would hav
myself with thee'—then whis
reigned with thee Queen over
I think I must live and die
only. Well, "the stroke of Sop
something.'

I looked at her strangely in
I knew whose was the hand tha
of Sopuza.' She went on:

'Ah, ah, Untúswa! The gre
for thee can never be thine.
I would have had thee do it—ye
to thee, thou great, brave, hones
refused to strike the sleeping on
a King in his downfall rather th
thyself. Thou wilt

And with these words she began to spread the mats in the hut, and heaped more wood upon the fire, and saw that things were in their places. Then she came and sat beside me.

Well, what mattered further greatness? I was great enough, being high in the councils of those who, under the King, ruled the nation, and for long I sat thus in a high place, and the favour of Mpande was always over me. But I had indeed passed through strange things, even as old Gasitye had predicted I should when speaking from the ghost-cliff in the Valley of the Red Death. Yes, and even more was I destined to see, for soon the Amabuna were driven out in their turn, and the land they had seized from us was reft from them by the English. Howbeit on these we made no war, for they entered into a treaty with Mpande that the Zulu people should dwell on this side of the Tugela, and the English on the other; and this agreement they kept faithfully for a long space of time until they began to fear Cetywayo, and then——but, *Nkose*, about that you know, and I have already told far too long a tale for one night. Yet, it is strange that the sight of the horns of your oxen, branching through the mist, should have drawn forth not only the tale of the ghost-bull and the Valley of the Red Death, but a greater one still—even that of the downfall and death of

... has come for sleep. Sleep w
I know not whether you will re
again to hear tales of its old doi
blood, of warrior-kings and sorce
have the life of the ghosts of ma
for I am old now, and my t
a longer sleep than that which no
neath your waggon. *Nkose! Hla*

But though old Untúswa could
with his blanket over his head could
beneath the shelter of the waggo
refused to come. The graphic tale
the tale of the first downfall of the
the dead of night on the very spot
contested th[illegible]

seemed to people all the surrounding waste; and looking forth, it needed no great tax on the imagination to conjure up the shades of slain warriors rising in hundreds from their common grave down yonder on the slope; and, shield and spear-armed, re-forming in wild and fantastic array of war.

And over and above such fanciful flights it was a tale to set one thinking—if one had never thought before—of the senselessness of deciding offhand the morality of this or that deed which helpeth to make history from one hard-and-fast point of view, and that point of view the British; or of stigmatising even a savage potentate as a treacherous and cruel monster, because he is not particular as to his methods when it becomes a question of preserving his nation's rights and his nation's greatness, what time such are threatened and invaded by Christians, whom subsequent events show to be the reverse of models of uprightness or fair dealing themselves. And it was even as old Untúswa had said: 'You white people and ourselves see things differently, and I suppose it will always be so.'

Yes, it was a fitting episode in the annals of a warrior nation, that tale of fierce wars, and intrigue, and sturdy loyalty, and even of a chivalry, not exactly describable by the term 'rude'; most of all, too, was it a tale essentially human, showing how the same desires

lay its greatest charm.





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